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Breaking Down a Smashing Career

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What You Should Know Before You Go

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Your Backstage Pass to the Big Show

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Inside His New Album

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SECRETS OF THE MASTERS
Behind Dokken's "Dream Warriors"

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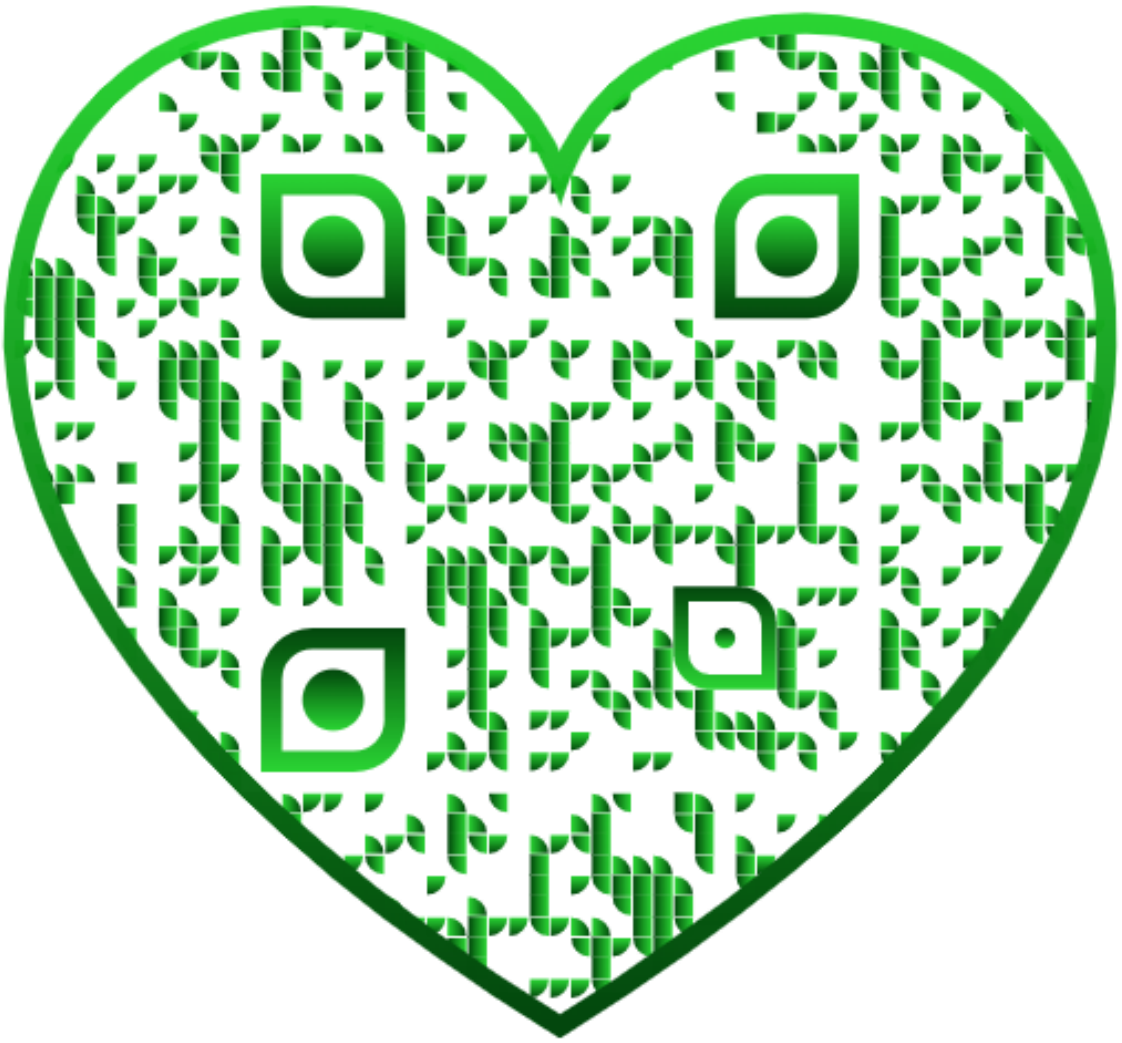
Pictured: A fragment of a Telecaster smashed by Pete Townshend in Asbury Park, NJ, on August 12, 1967.



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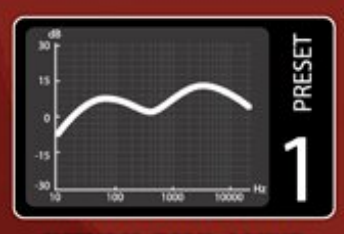
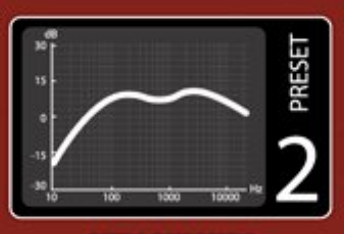
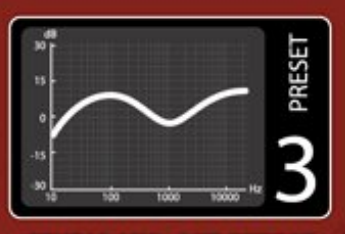


NATURAL FOLK SOUND



MELLOW MIDS



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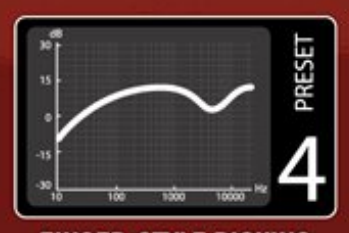

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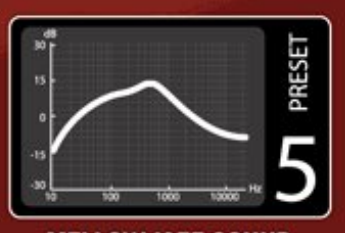

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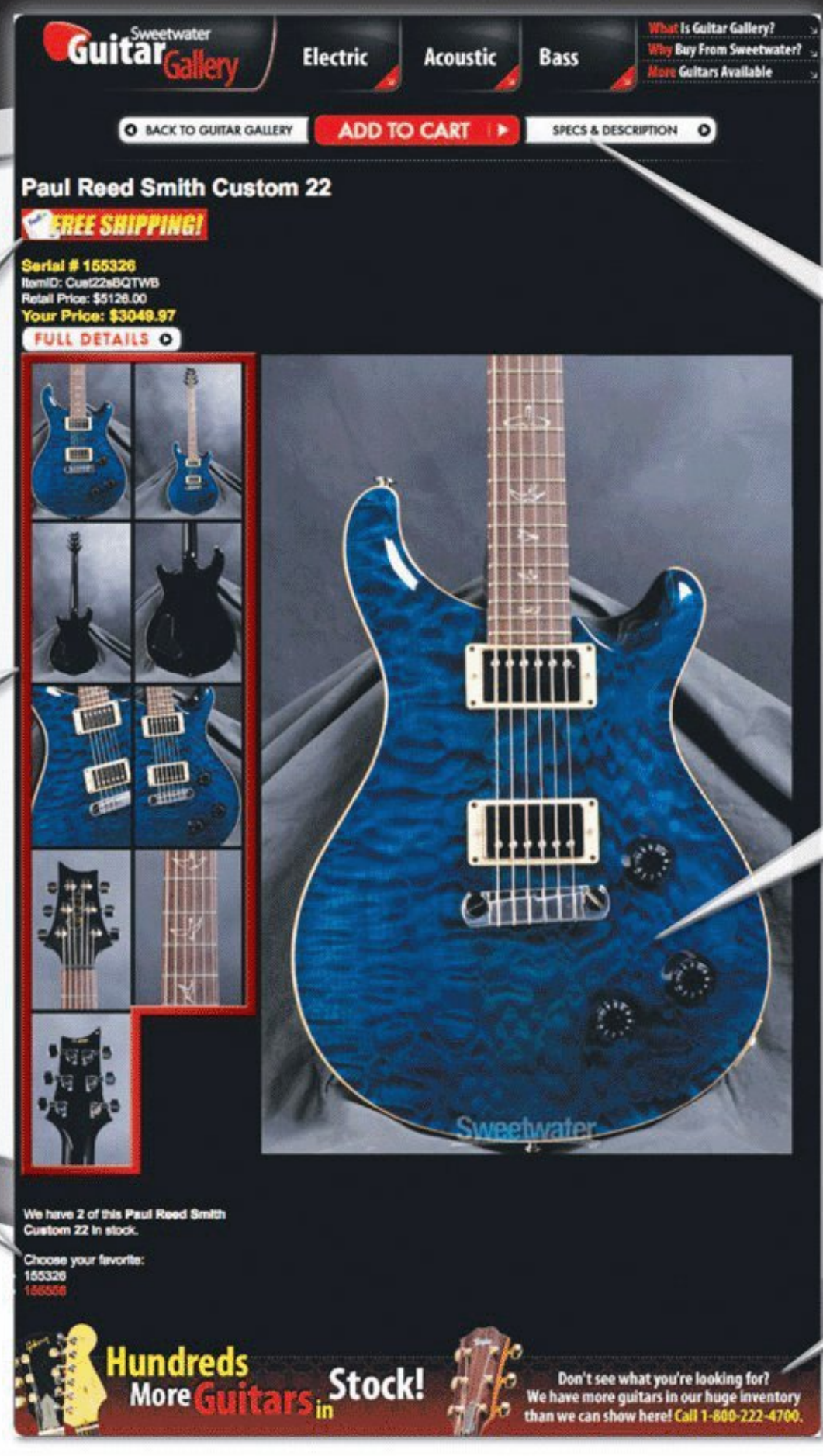

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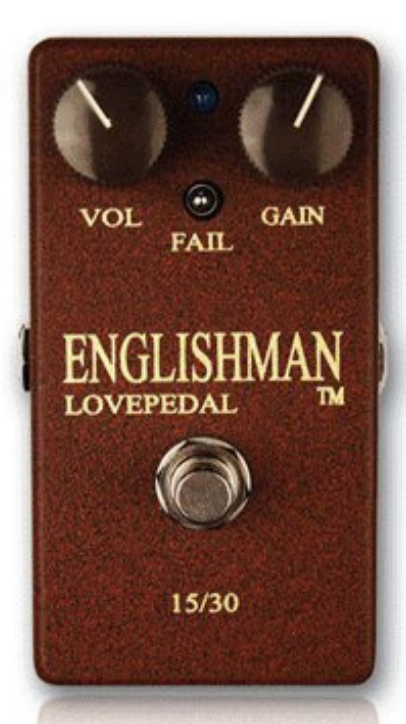

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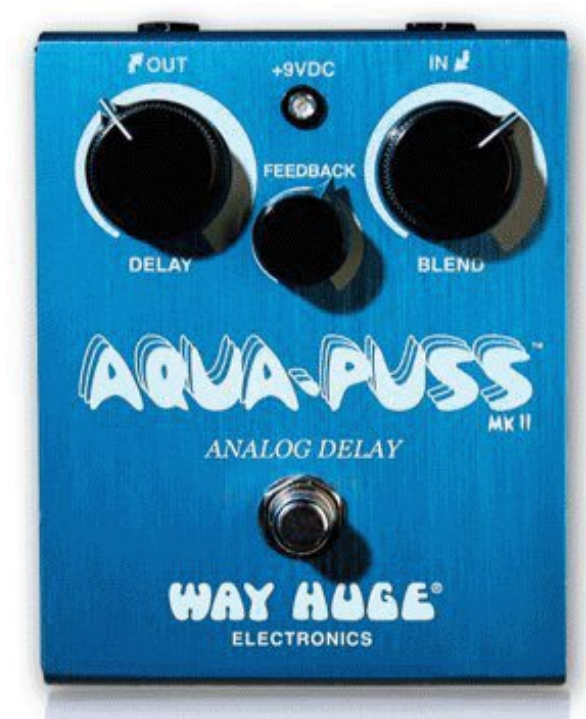

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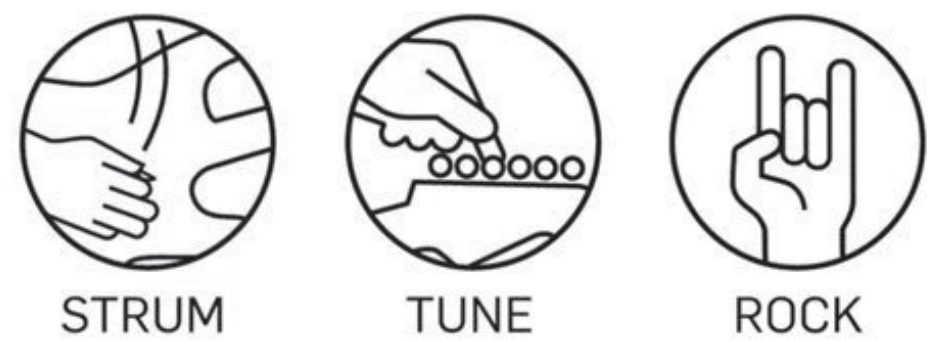

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Guitar Addicts

It's one thing to like The Who and Kiss, and to dabble a bit with guitars, but it's another thing entirely if you know Pete Towshend's signal chain on *Live at Leeds*, what kind of pickups are in Ace Frehley's old tobacco sunburst Les Paul Standard, and can give someone pointers on how to hire the right engineer to work on an album. If you're already in the latter camp or are in the process of making that transition, well… here we are. You're not in this alone.

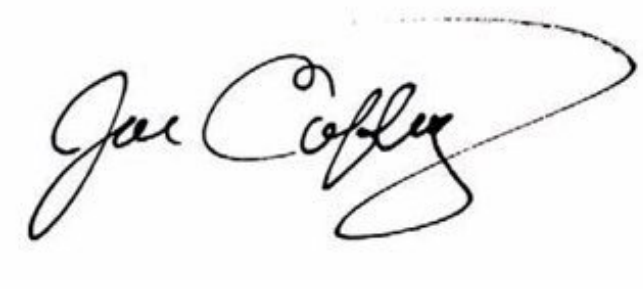
Some good news—we've expanded our approach to bringing you this kind of content "the way you want it," as we like to say. First, a refresher. Some of you dig an old-school, glossy print magazine, some of you read the free online version of our magazine that looks just like a magazine, and some of you read the regular web versions of our magazine articles. Now there's a fourth version of our magazine available through our new iPhone app. Once you download the app, which is free, you can read entire issues of *Premier Guitar* on the go (and download them for offline reading!). The *PG* iPhone app also allows you to catch up on our daily gear news coverage and watch *PG*'s ever-growing library of video content. Plus, you can search, share and bookmark your favorites for later reading—and it's all free for your iPhone and iTouch. Just go to the iTunes store and search for "Premier Guitar" under apps.

As for the issue at hand, we're stoked about our candid conversation with Pete Townshend. We learned an awful lot in this interview and are excited to hear what you think about it. This is also our recording-focused issue of the year, so we go into the studio with Ace Frehley, give you tips on what you should know *before* you embark on your own studio projects, and cover a number of topics that make a big difference by the time your booked studio date arrives. Also, one of the companies that has helped legions of players create their own home recording setups, Line 6, has participated in a reader-driven interview. The company's engineers answer your questions in this month's "Go Ahead and Ask" segment. (Bob Taylor of Taylor Guitars is next, don't forget to submit your question for Bob at premierguitar.com/goaheadandask)

In the final installment of our three-part exploration of understanding tone, John Bohlinger goes where some players refuse to go—into the realm of tonal belief systems. We're certainly not going to agree on these matters, but it sure is interesting to break everything down. We round out the issue with an analysis of the multi-track master tapes from Dokken's "Dream Warriors." And we take a look at one of the biggest gigs you could ever hope to be a part of: the Grammy Awards show. Talk about a big production with a lot of gear.

This month's gear review lineup includes our in-depth look at Digidesign's Eleven Rack, which promises to be the ultimate tool for the recording guitarist, but is also designed as a stand-alone unit without the need for a computer, so you can play out with it and get the same sounds you used in the studio. Also, we look at the Model E1 guitar from Moog, a boutique offering from Nikita Guitars, a new bass from Xotic, and we dig into the new American Special line of Strats and Teles from Fender. Not enough of a gear fix for you? Check out our reviews of Creation Audio Labs' Holy Fire overdrive/distortion, TC Electronic's cool new PolyTune, and Egnater's Renegade amp. There's more, but you get the picture—if you're a guitar addict like us, you've come to the right place.

Cheers,



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The Parable of Guitar Magazines and Stompboxes

You've probably noticed the pic above is different this month, and that's because I wanted to take a little space to introduce myself. My name is Shawn Hammond, and I'm the new Editor in Chief of your favorite guitar mag. Here at *PG*, our staff is growing—just like our audience—and we're moving some editorial functions and titles around in an effort to reconfigure internal operations. Fortunately, we've still got Chris Burgess, who has been carrying out the Herculean task of editing and overseeing copy pretty much singlehandedly for a while now. In his new role as Senior Editor, Chris will get to focus more on writing than herding hepcats—and that's something he's wanted to do for a while now.

As for me, if you've been reading guitar publications over the last 10+ years, there's a good chance you've read something I penned for mags like *Frets*, *Guitar World*, *Bass Player*, *Guitar World Acoustic*, *Bass Guitar* and *Guitar & Bass Buyer's Guide*—or something I wrote during my time as an editor at *Guitar Player*, *Acoustic Guitar* and the now-defunct *Play Guitar!* Working for all these outfits over the years has been a hell of a ride, that's for sure.

I've had a few friends comment that interviewing and writing about rock stars and their gear is going to make me rich and famous someday. I can't help but laugh, though, because A) the fame thing is both ridiculously implausible and not even on my radar, and B) the words "rich" and "journalist" pretty much never go together. But over the years I've realized that this line of work actually *has* enriched me. Maybe not so much monetarily, but absolutely and positively musically.

Don't get me wrong, I make a decent living. But before jumping into the guitar-mag trenches I was pretty much at the mercy of the Clear Channel radio monopoly and the aural pablum it pumps out to us through a criminally large number of stations across the country. Had I never made the connection between my twin passions—six-strings and writing—I never would've heard most of the focus-group-unfriendly artists that have changed my life, acts like Junior Brown, David Torn, Killswitch Engage, Sir Richard Bishop, the Blood Brothers, Nguyên Lê, Damon Fowler, Division of Laura Lee, the Kills, and many, many others. For all that—not to mention unforgettable experiences like having a classic-rock god audibly urinate and then flush during a phone interview (judging from the synchronization of the grunts and the tinkling sounds, the poor bastard desperately needed some Flomax)—I'm forever grateful.

At Winter NAMM this year I ran into one of my former magazine colleagues quite a few times. I remember the days when rival guitar-mag editors walked past each other at trade shows with their noses in the air, and I'm glad those days are mostly over. Naturally, the competition is still there—as it should be—but certainly there's no need for incivility. Anyway, at one point this guy came right out and said he looked forward to some friendly editorial jousting. I just laughed and nodded.

For my part, I relish the opportunity to cross lances with our rivals. But while our counterparts at the other mags will certainly put up a hell of a fight, *Premier Guitar* is the only one with the freedom or the means to be truly forward thinking and nimble in a constantly changing media landscape. And that's because we're a small, privately owned company full of guitar freaks with one purpose: To bring you the best guitar info on the planet the way *you* like it—that's why both print and online readers are flocking to *PG* as the great new hope of for all things guitar.

While we were at NAMM this past January, I thought about which cool new piece of gear sort of epitomized the differences between *PG* and our corporate-owned rivals. I settled on the spine-tinglingly awesome new Z. Vex Inventobox (look for a review in the next couple of months). Zachary Vex is renowned for designing stompboxes that lead guitarists into uncharted tonal territories, devices that resurrect our excitement about axes in ways that the same old stomps no longer do. And his new Inventobox takes that mojo one step further by giving you components and a couple of blank circuit boards to create two customized channels of screaming sonic glory that will take you where *you* want to go—not where tradition says you should go.

Likewise, whether you prefer the gorgeous, quality paper of *Premier Guitar*'s print edition or the lightning-fast multimedia convenience of every issue being available in its entirety at premierguitar.com (or maybe you switch between them like crunchy rhythm and searing lead channels), we've got you covered. Our breadth of coverage is unsurpassed—just think of how many unheard-of brands we've introduced you to in our reviews this past year alone—and our delivery melds the best of what's tried-and-true with the type of content today's generation demands.

And we do it because we're just like you—guitar-slinging junkies with no hope of recovering. And that's just how we like it.

Keep on twangin',

Shawn Hammond
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FEATURES + REVIEWS

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Pete Townshend

On Guitar-Smashing Regrets, Stylistic Evolution and Becoming a Gear Aficionado

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Bob Cianci lands a killer post-Super Bowl interview that's likely Townshend's most forthcoming and gear-centric ever.

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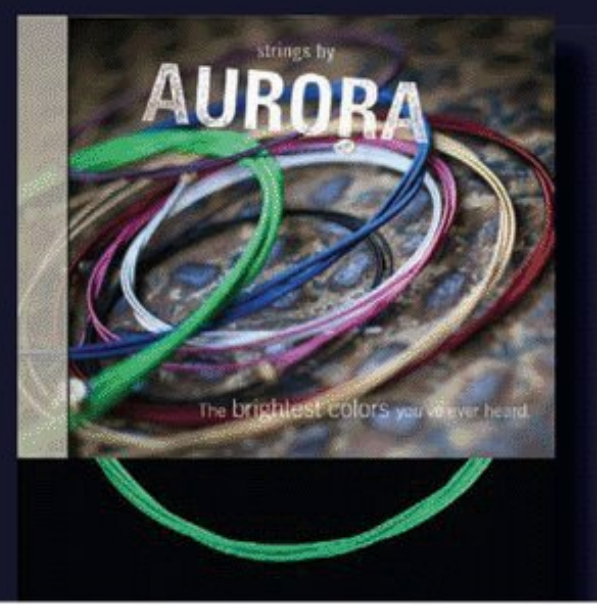

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LESSONS + DEPARTMENTS

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On the Cover:

Featured Guitar: A fragment of a Telecaster smashed by Pete Townshend in Asbury Park, NJ, on August 12, 1967.
Photo by Carianne Cianci
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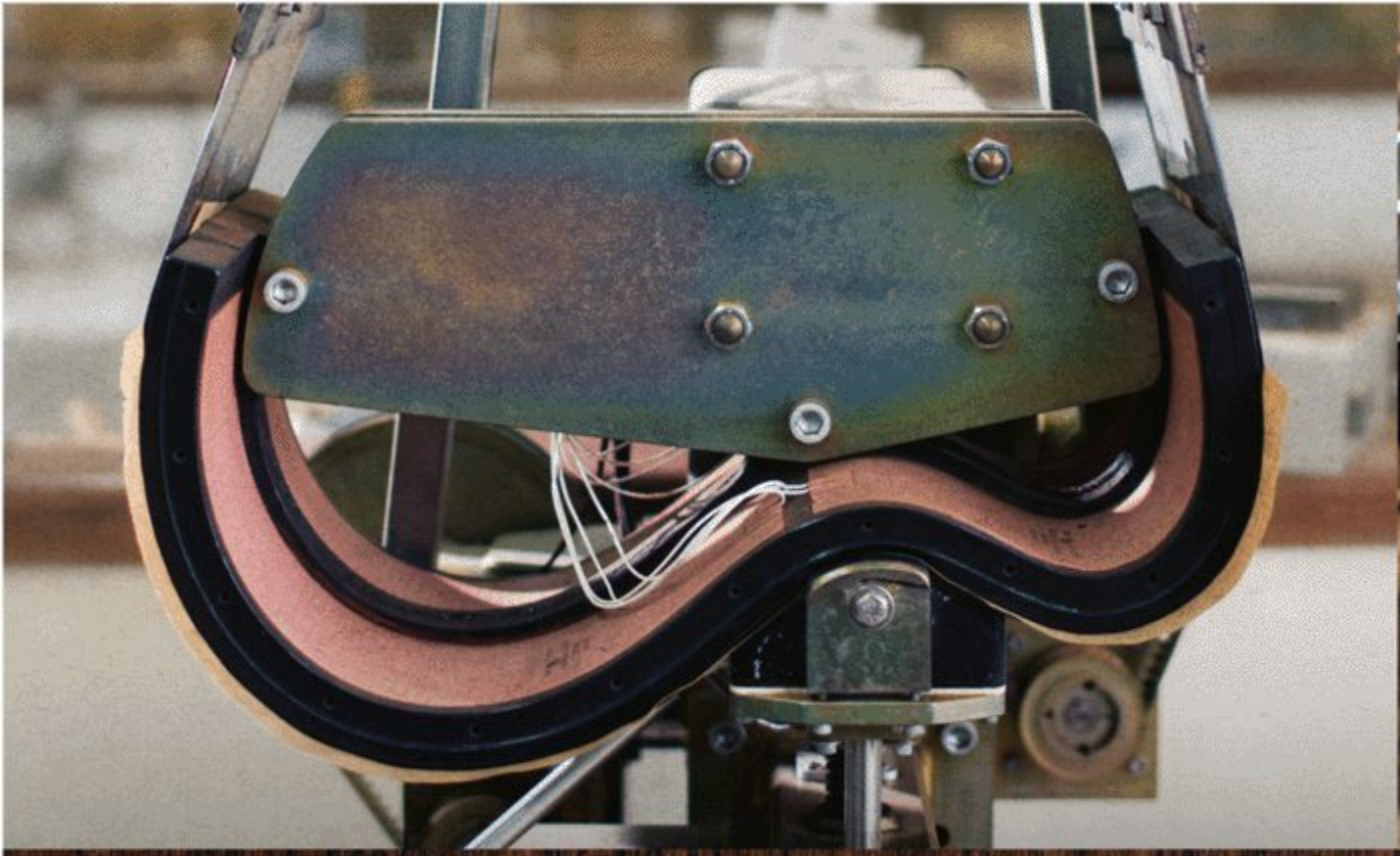

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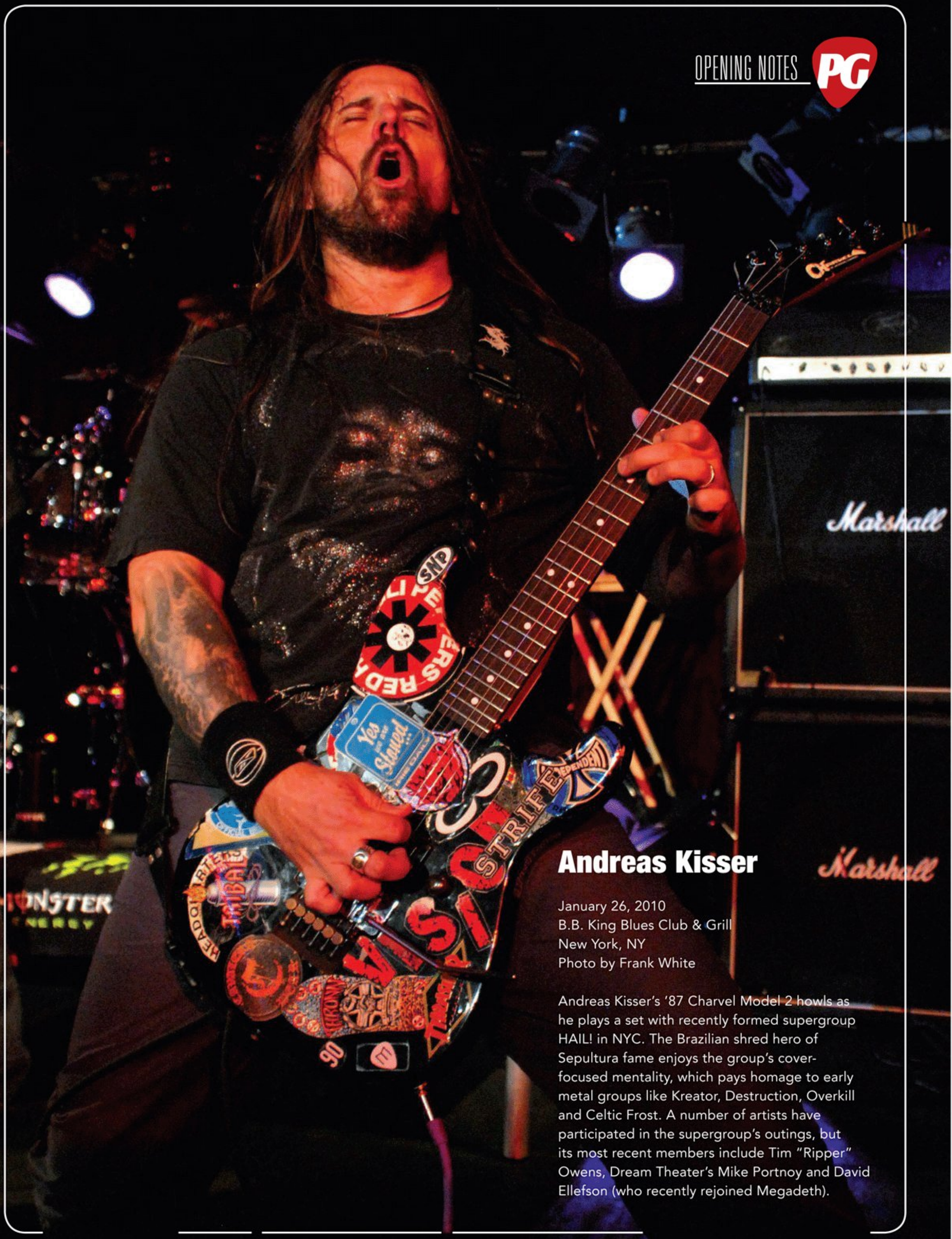

Andreas Kisser

January 26, 2010
B.B. King Blues Club & Grill
New York, NY
Photo by Frank White

Andreas Kisser's '87 Charvel Model 2 howls as he plays a set with recently formed supergroup HAIL! in NYC. The Brazilian shred hero of Sepultura fame enjoys the group's cover-focused mentality, which pays homage to early metal groups like Kreator, Destruction, Overkill and Celtic Frost. A number of artists have participated in the supergroup's outings, but its most recent members include Tim "Ripper" Owens, Dream Theater's Mike Portnoy and David Ellefson (who recently rejoined Megadeth).

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Billy Duffy

February 19, 2010
Orange County Fairgrounds
Costa Mesa, CA
Photo by Harmony Gerber

The Cult's Billy Duffy savors a big lick on his '85 Les Paul Custom at the MusInk Tattoo & Music Festival. Wookie at TonePros tells us he modded the guitar with a pair of capless BurstBucker Pros, a TonePros T3BP-G (Nashville-style) bridge, a TonePros T1ZS-G tailpiece, black knobs with the gold centers, and an RS Guitarworks Modern Upgrade pot and cap kit. The guitar was also refretted with NOS '70s-era Gibson wide oval fretwire by Greg Platzer at BCR Music & Sound. Platzer also installed a bone nut.

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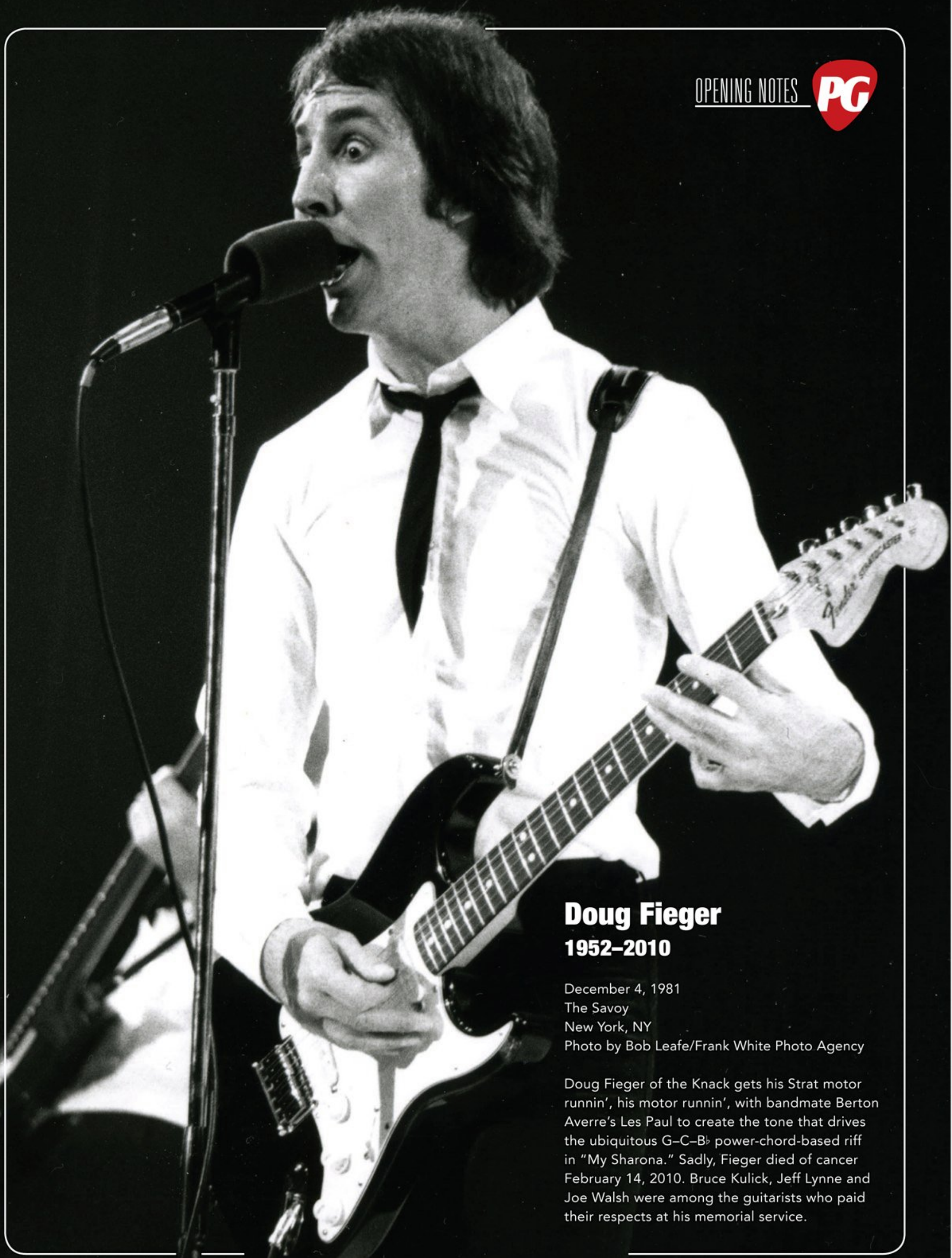

Doug Fieger
1952–2010

December 4, 1981
The Savoy
New York, NY
Photo by Bob Leafe/Frank White Photo Agency

Doug Fieger of the Knack gets his Strat motor runnin', his motor runnin', with bandmate Berton Averre's Les Paul to create the tone that drives the ubiquitous G–C–B♭ power-chord-based riff in "My Sharona." Sadly, Fieger died of cancer February 14, 2010. Bruce Kulick, Jeff Lynne and Joe Walsh were among the guitarists who paid their respects at his memorial service.

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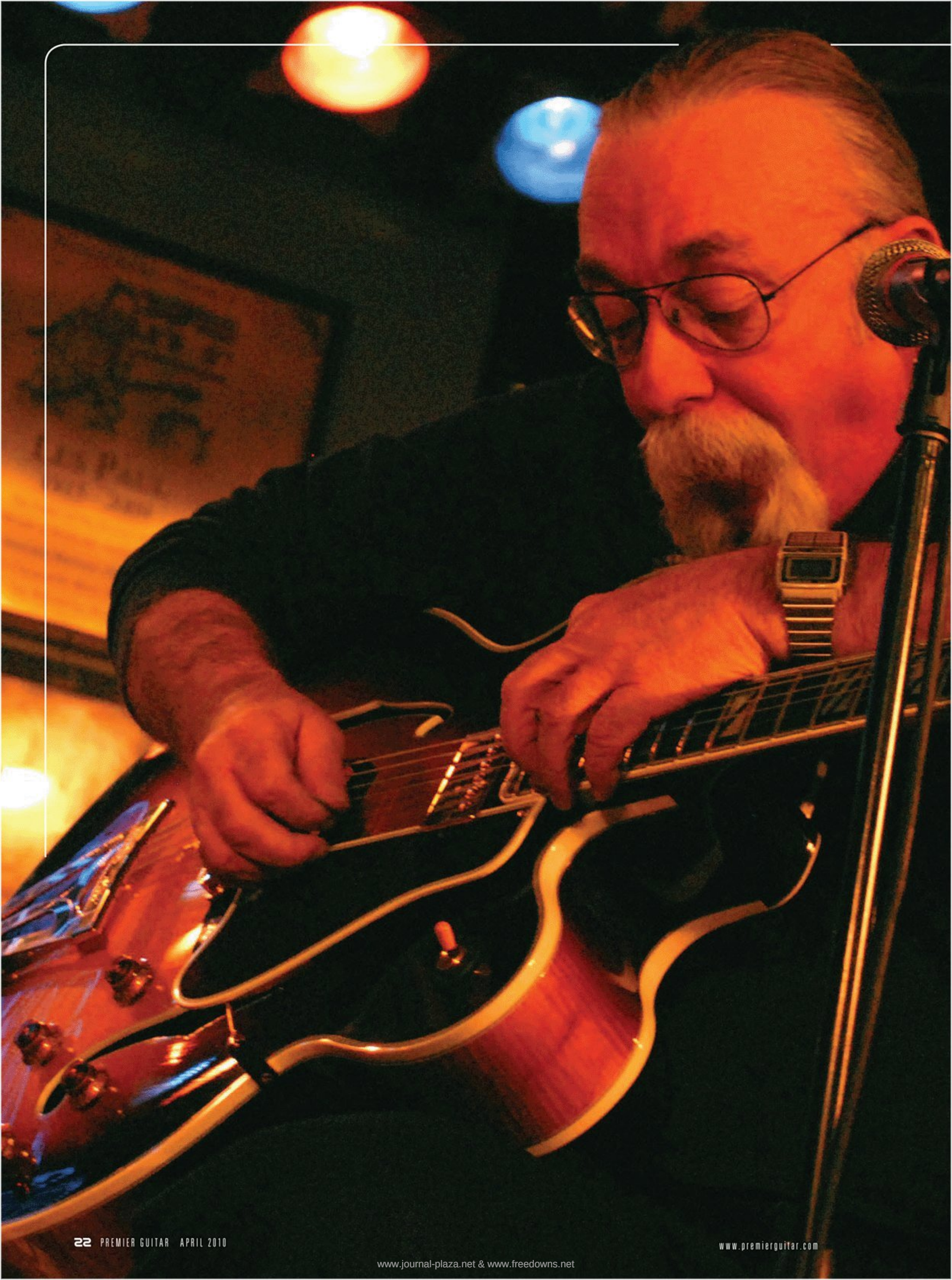

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Skunk Baxter

February 22, 2010
The Iridium Jazz Club
New York, NY
Photo by Frank White

Jeff "Skunk" Baxter explores the neck of a Gibson Super 400 CES during a guest performance with the Les Paul Trio. Baxter and Paul were friends for many years and had played together many times, with Skunk often filling in on guitar or bass at Paul's famous weekly gigs. These days, Baxter spends much of his time as a consultant for defense contractors and government agencies. He has a long list of session credits and is known for his years as a Doobie Brother and for playing with Steely Dan from *Can't Buy a Thrill* to *Pretzel Logic*.

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Merle Haggard

February 16, 2010
Verizon Wireless Theater
Houston, TX
Photo by Rick Johnson

Merle Haggard gently picks his customized "Roy" nylon-string guitar during a recent performance with fellow outlaw Kris Kristofferson. Haggard, who has 38 number one hits to his name, has played many different kinds of guitars over the years. His signature guitars include the Grammer Merle Haggard Model, the Martin 000C-28 SMH, and the Fender Custom Shop Merle Haggard Signature Telecaster.

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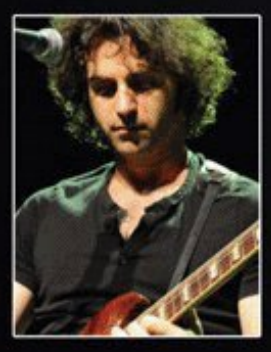
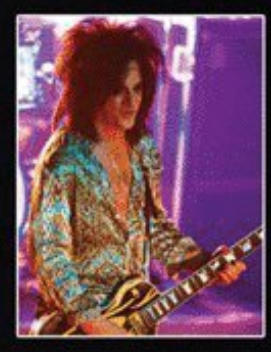
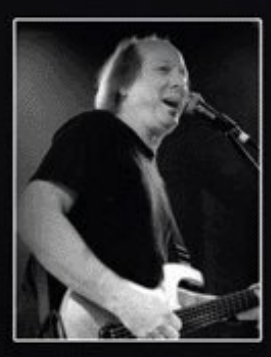


Dweezil Zappa
Zappa Plays Zappa
"The Axe-Fx is a brilliant invention. You can recreate any classic tone with exacting precision as well as make your own signature sound."

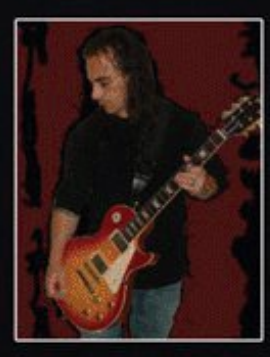


Steve Stevens
Billy Idol, Grammy Winner - Top Gun
"To say that my AxeFX Ultra is a guitar efx unit is laughable. It's become a sonic religion to me."

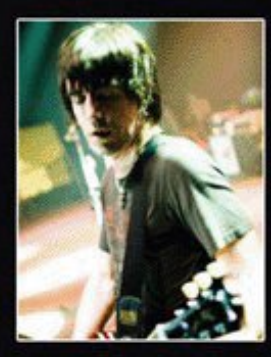
Dean Parks
Studio Guitarist, Steely Dan, et. al.
"The Ultra's amp sounds, great effects and the advanced routing options make this virtual guitar rig the one you want."



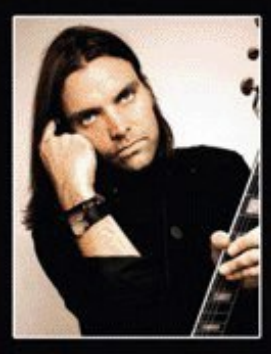
Adrian Belew
King Crimson, David Bowie, Talking Heads
"Powerful, pristine, flexible, deep, monstrous and dead quiet. The Axe-Fx is world-class processing at its best."



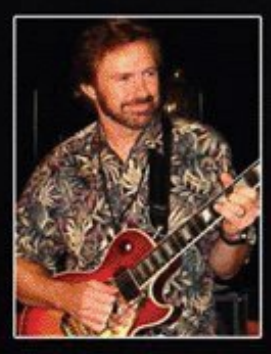
Dan Spitz
Anthrax, DeuxMonkey
"The Ultra has given me the ability to mod my amp without a soldering iron - dream answered. We've just turned the corner big time."



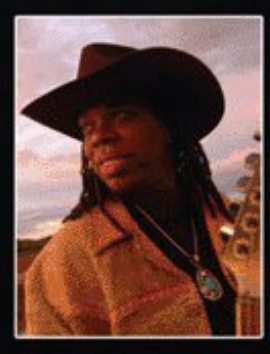
Peter Thorn
Chris Cornell, LA Session Player
"The Axe-Fx is the best #@$*%!$ guitar processor ever! It's like a deluxe Swiss Army Knife for guitar tone."



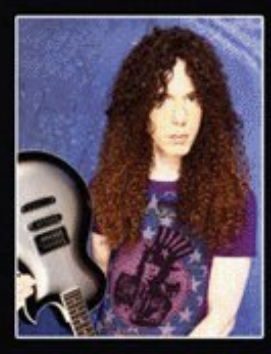
Chris Traynor
Gavin Rossdale, Helmet, Orange 9mm
"When it comes to tone, I will not compromise.
The Axe-Fx is my big rig in a small box. Seriously powerful!"



Hadley Hockensmith
LA Studio Guitarist, Neil Diamond Band
"I love my Ultra - so much fidelity, amp goodness & processing power. The 'sonic bar' has been totally recalibrated by F.A.!"



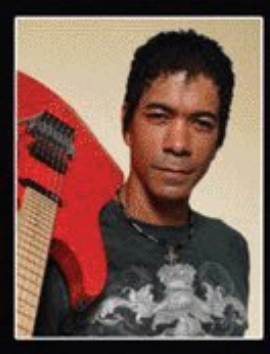
Larry Mitchell
Grammy Winning Producer, Guitarist
"One of my best purchases ever! With my Axe-Fx, I can now tour the world with my ultimate tone rig – and it's a carry-on!"



Marty Friedman
Megadeth, Cacaphony
"The Axe-Fx is unreal ... amazing, unique, and most importantly, totally usable tone in every situation."

Ty Tabor
King's X, The Jelly Jam
"I can replace multiple effects units in my rig with a single Axe-Fx Ultra – and it sounds better. All I can say is, 'Wow!'"

Jeff Loomis
Nevermore
"I am able to create the exact guitar sound and touch dynamics I want from the ground up with my Axe-Fx. Need I say more?"



Greg Howe
Solo Recording Artist, Justin Timberlake, Michael Jackson
"The Axe-Fx is arguably the most impressive guitar related item I've ever owned."

Jeff Schroeder
The Smashing Pumpkins The Lassie Foundation
"The Axe-Fx not only models the best sounds of the past, it will also create the future. I find this unit truly inspiring."

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Fender® Reintroduces Pure Nickel and Nickel-Plated Steel Electric Guitar Strings

by Lisa Sharken

Many guitarists are on a never-ending quest for the ultimate tone. Typically, the first thing that a player will think is that a different guitar, amp, pickups, or maybe a new stompbox will do the trick. But it's often the small things that go overlooked, and sometimes it's these small things that can make a huge difference in tone and performance. One of the most frequently overlooked accessories is the string! If you think about it, the string is a crucial tool to a guitar player. The string is the physical connection between the player and their instrument. Players should take a bit of time to experiment with different strings and find the set that will deliver the best sound and feel for their instrument and playing style. Different materials and gauges will offer different results.

As a leading manufacturer of strings, for decades Fender® has strived to deliver a high-quality product. Taking advantage of the better materials and improvements in engineering available today, Fender recently made some changes to take its already widely used line of strings and brought it up to an even higher level of quality. For 2010, the Fender string package got a facelift. The new package design looks more modern and is appealing to the eye, as well as being easy to recognize in a store. Staying "green," all six strings are now packaged in a corrosion-proof bag and the complete set is packaged in a recyclable box printed with soy-based inks. One cool feature on the new strings is that the ball ends are painted with classic vintage Fender colors like sea foam green, graffiti yellow, lake placid blue and candy apple red to identify them individually. Don't worry if you can't determine the gauges by feel, as the color codes are printed on the inner bag.

I received samples of the new USA-made Fender Pure Nickel 150 and Nickel-Plated Steel 250 sets in light gauge (.009–.042) and regular gauge (.010–.046). I tested the strings on four pairs of similar guitars which all resonate well both electrically and when played acoustically. I chose two Telecaster®, two Stratocaster®, two Les Paul® Standard guitars and two Floyd Rose®-equipped '80s San Dimas® Charvel® guitars. The Telecaster and Les Paul guitars were strung with .010s, and the Stratocaster and Charvel guitars were strung with .009s. Each guitar had a pro set-up. I used a late-'70s Fender Twin Reverb® for clean tones and an early-'70s 100-watt Marshall® half stack for dirty tones. No pedals, just straight into the amps.

Out of the package, both types of strings feel silky smooth to the touch and not sticky or greasy, like they have any type of unusual coating. They're very comfortable to play on, bend, slide, and they stay in tune rather well after being stretched for a few minutes. Tuning becomes more stable the longer the strings are on the guitar.

I started my evaluation by playing clean chords and riffs with the two Teles, listening to the qualities of the Pure Nickel set first. The Pure Nickel strings have a warm, even, unadulterated tone that allows the guitar's inherent tone to come through. You can add treble on the amp's EQ for more edge, or dial in a softer tone with less treble, more

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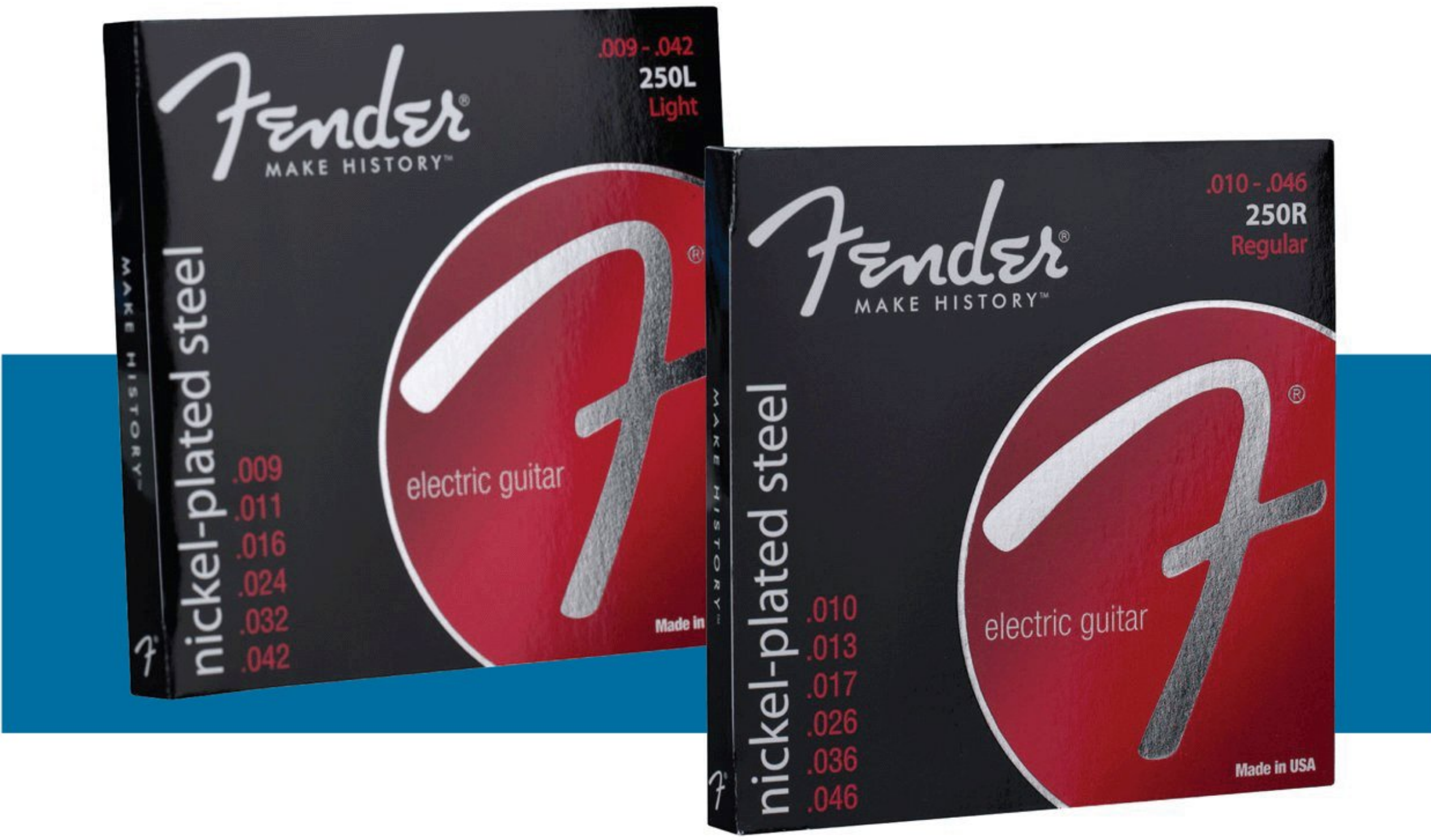

mids and bass. I decided to use the Pure Nickel set as a point of reference to compare the Nickel-Plated Steel strings. When I compared the Tele set up with Nickel-Plated Steel strings, I noticed that the steel core brought out a distinctly crisp, edgier and more biting tone while the nickel retains some of the warmer characteristics. There's more snap and pop to them, they are more sensitive to finger movements, and they cut through more than the traditional-sounding Pure Nickel strings. Nickel-Plated Steel is good choice for a Tele when playing a more aggressive style where you would want to hear more "spank." The same is true for the Strats. The Pure Nickel strings serve up warmer, more classic sounds while Nickel-Plated Steel strings bring out more hard-hitting characteristics. Depending on the sound of your pickups and the tone you're going for, either set can do the job.

For the Charvels, I preferred Nickel-Plated Steel, particularly for playing heavier rock and lead lines with sharper teeth to cut through the mix. The steel also seems to bring back some of the harmonics that can be lost when a guitar has a floating tremolo like a Floyd Rose. The Pure Nickel strings are simply rich and classic, and I preferred them for playing cleaner parts with the Charvel. To my ear, the Pure Nickel strings also proved to be a better match for the flame-maple top Les Pauls. I favored the rounder tones produced by the strings to smooth out some of the biting tones that a maple top adds. However, if I was using a Les Paul with a dark, dull or muddy tone and needed to add some edge, sparkle and perhaps a bit more definition of the notes, the Nickel-Plated Steel strings would likely be a better choice to balance out the tonal range and bring out more of the highs and harmonics I would want to hear along with the warm, rich over all tonal characteristics.

To test the longevity of the strings, I left them on each guitar for a week and listened to them over and over again to see if there was any noticeable degradation in their tonal quality or feel. It is important to take note of whether strings retain their tonality and to see if they become brittle or tarnished. What I found is that the strings held up extremely well through the week with no real loss in tone. They continued to stay in tune (I did check tuning each time I picked up the guitars) and the finish did not tarnish. Wiping off your strings after playing is typically recommended to remove dirt and help extend their life.

If you're always tweaking your gear and searching for that magical combination, your strings should be a strong consideration. There is great value in learning what the tonal characteristics are that different types of strings will produce. This information is essential in knowing how to shape your tone. So before making major gear-change decisions, simply try changing the type of strings you use. It's surely the easiest and most inexpensive piece of the tonal puzzle. After testing Fender's new string offerings, I'm sure they have a set that will enhance your guitar's tone and feel to suit your playing style.

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This Month on PREMIERGuitar.com

More Gear Reviewed Online

Online reviews this month include the Blackstar HT Club 40, part of the company's brand new Venue series; ToadWorks Pipeline Stereo Harmonic Vibrato/Tremolo; Apogee GiO guitar interface for Mac; and more. New reviews are added throughout each week, so check back all month long.

Photo: Mike Banks

Musikmesse, Here We Come!

We'll have all of the new gear—and great international companies you've never heard of—covered at the 2010 Musikmesse show in Frankfurt, Germany. The event is March 24–27, so mark your calendar and don't forget to log on to premierguitar.com for photo galleries and videos from the show.

Inside Hughes & Kettner

Wonder how the masters at Hughes & Kettner build amps in Germany? We take you inside their factory to see an H&K amp's meticulous journey to finished product.

>>>

Ken Scott: Beatles Engineer

Ken Scott worked at Abbey Road from age 16 on, eventually engineering much of the Beatles' *White Album*. He shares his experience recording George Harrison's guitars and much more in our web-only interview.

Plus much more...

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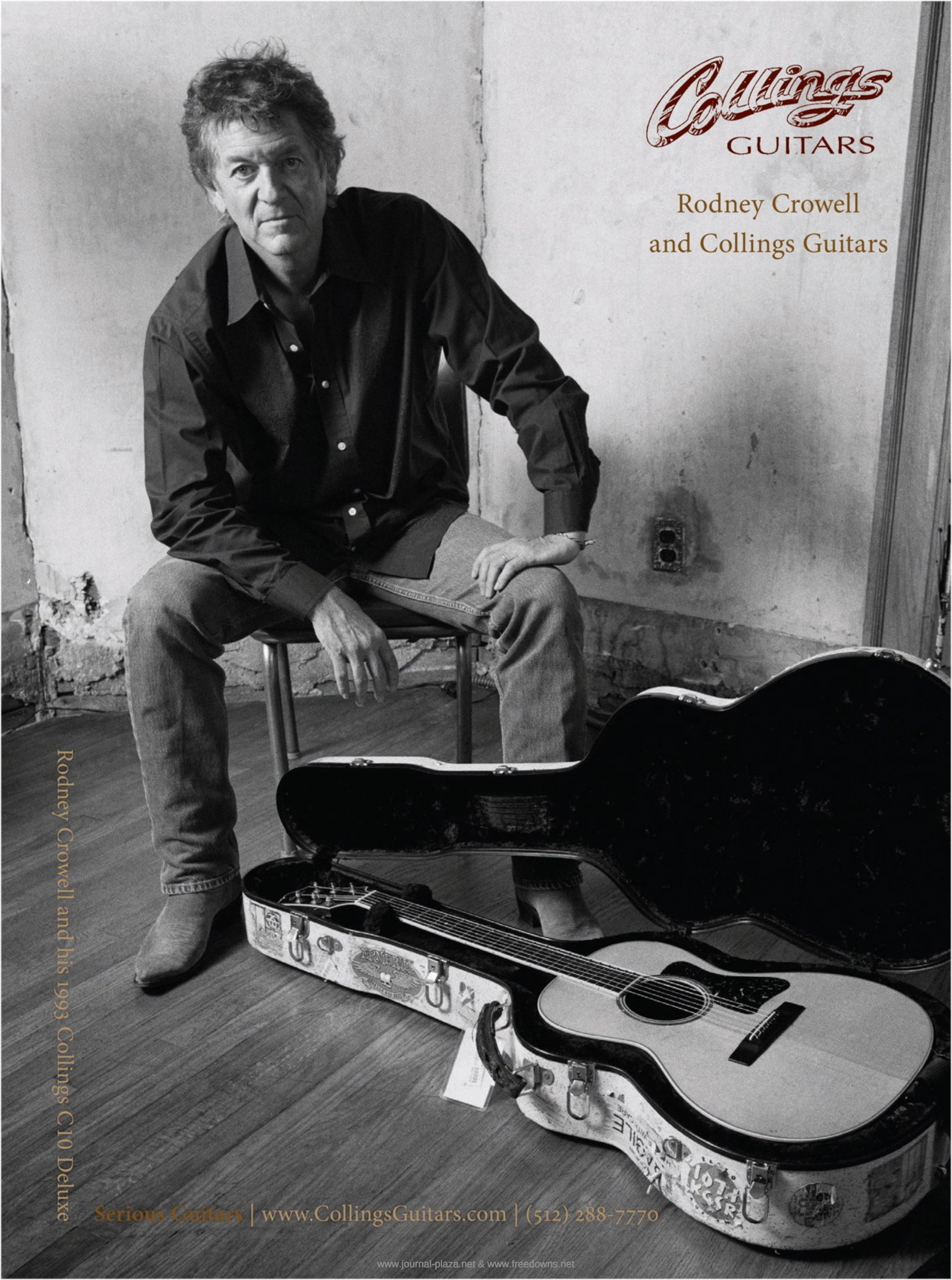

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LETTERS

Keep the Bass!

In response to the letter in your March 2010 issue from Paul Crawford demanding you stop the bass reviews and features, claiming that most readers find them a waste of time, I take exception. I eagerly look forward to your bass features and wish you'd actually have more. I play bass, but I prefer your magazine to *Bass Player* or any other music magazine on the market. I also play guitar, woodwinds and synthesizers and find a way to apply all your articles to my performances and recordings with all those instruments. With the proliferation of multi-string instruments such as the Chapman Stick and 8+ string guitars, I think a case may be made that the line between guitar and bass is diminishing. Keep up the GREAT work!
Robert Rabinowitz

Recently Paul Crawford wrote in your March issue complaining of the few bass guitar reviews and features you provide each month. I want to thank you for stating that you will continue to include such articles. Unfortunately, Mr. Crawford seems to be exactly the kind of musician I would *not* want to share a stage with, especially if he couldn't share a few pages devoted to us bass players. Shame on him!
Tom R.

After Paul Crawford's letter, we received more letters supporting our bass coverage than we have for possibly any other topic we've ever covered. We hear you loud and clear—bass coverage isn't going anywhere.

Funky, Cheap Love

Bob Cianci only touched on Burns Guitars in his article ["Funky Cheap Electrics," March 2010]. They are amongst my favorites of the genre. The Burns axes were re-branded Baldwin in the mid to late '60s and imported into the US.

Here is a picture of me in 1968 with my Burns/Baldwin Double-Six that I fell in love with when I heard it being used by The Tijuana Brass and Spanky & Our Gang on their albums. Even though it was branded "Baldwin" on the pickguards, the pickups were "Burns-O-Matic". The switching and controls are very much like a Strat.

By the way, I still have the Double-Six. I wish I still had the Jaguar.
H. S. Buehlmier

I enjoyed Bob Cianci's article about wacky electrics. I've a story about an oddball. In 1998 I was in India and purchased a "guitar" which vaguely looks like a jazz archtop instrument. Masonite pick guard, aluminum tailpiece, awful plaid gigbag, light as a feather, couldn't possibly have a truss rod even though it says there is. Sort of fun to play, but rarely stays in tune. The best part was the brand name; Givson, written on the headstock with a familiar font. It cost all of Rs. 1100, which was $28. When I got home I found they have a website (givson.com) and right on the homepage it states "beware of imitation." Take a look at them. They have electrics and "mandolines." I've never seen another one.
Tim S. Jones

Thanks so much for sharing both of your experiences with funky, cheap electrics. We certainly got a good laugh from Givson's warning against imitations as well!

More Psychology

I'm reading/re-reading/and reading again the Feb. 2010 issue on tone, and I'd like to chip-in my two cents on the subject.

First, I do agree to a certain extent that a lot of your tone comes from your fingers, but I also feel that your equipment has quite a bit to do with it. The best guitar tone I think I've ever heard was an early '60s Strat through an early '70s SVT bass head, four early '70s Marshall 1960 straight-front cabinets and an original Fender Reverb Tank, with just a custom-built booster pedal in between for lead breaks. The tone coming from that setup was enough to blow your mind! I've tried to achieve that tone with my Custom Shop Strat, fairly new 100-watt plexi, and numerous pedal combinations without any luck—can't even get close!
Rocky

We commiserate, Rocky, but keep on chasing that tone! And be sure to check out this month's "The Cult of Tone" article, which wraps up the three-part series.

March 2010 Corrections

On page 17 ("Opening Notes"), we incorrectly spelled Pete Townshend's name. We regret the error.

On page 30 ("Slash and Marshall Announce Plans for *Appetite* Amp at NAMM"), we incorrectly identified the original AFD amp as an early-seventies JCM2203. We mixed up our rumors; the amp was identified officially as a JCM800 2203, but had previously been rumored to be an early-'70s pre-master-volume Marshall. Clearly, an early-'70s JCM800 does not exist.

Keep those comments coming!

Please send your suggestions, gripes, comments and good words directly to info@premierguitar.com.
You can also send snail mail to Premier Guitar, Three Research Center, Marion, IA 52302.
Please remember to include your full name and city and state of residence. Selected letters may be edited for clarity.

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Taku Sakashta: Luthier's Legacy Lives On

By Adam Hunt

Rohnert Park, CA – The February 13, 2010 edition of the Santa Rosa, Calif., Press Democrat made a shocking announcement that a body was discovered in neighboring Rohnert Park. Word quickly spread through the guitar community that it was famed guitar maker Taku Sakashta. Friends, musicians and fellow guitar makers were stunned by the loss of one of the most exciting and original guitar builders of his time.

As of press time, an arrest had been made in this seemingly random act of violence, and the suspect was in police custody.

Sakashta's Craft

Sakashta became interested in guitars at the age of 10 in his hometown of Kobe, Japan. He attended engineering and design school in Japan and then spent five years developing a curriculum for teaching guitar making at the school. Over the next eight years, he designed, developed and produced custom guitars for major guitar companies. He came to the US in 1991 and started his own business. In 1996, he moved to Sonoma, California, where he continued to build guitars of all types.

According to fellow luthier Denis Merrill, Sakashta's goal was "to achieve perfection in sound, construction, decoration and finish. His primary focus was the archtop guitar, although he could build *anything* and did so for many of the world's best guitarists. The world has lost a gentle man. I will miss his sense of humor."

Sakashta's creative designs and reputation for astonishing sounding instruments soon attracted interest from the likes of Tony Darren, Robben Ford, Tony Marcus, Boz Scaggs and Martin Simpson. At the time of Sakashta's death, his website mentioned that he was in the process of designing guitars for both Tuck Andress and Pat Martino.

Former Sakashta student and renowned bicycle frame maker, Ross Shafer, talked about the death of his friend and former teacher. "Now that Taku has left us, I realize that the real gift I got from him was the high level of confidence it takes to dive into a completely new craft. Thanks so much for the beauty you created, for helping me to learn skills I never thought myself capable of. Most of all, thank you for raising the bar of my confidence so much higher than it ever was before we worked together. R.I.P. Taku…artist, craftsman, teacher, friend and dream maker!"

Noted archtop builder Tom Ribbecke commented on his friend's achievements, saying, "Taku managed to come to the US and achieve not only acceptance but admiration from his peers. He was truly one of our unique, tight-knit luthier community ... he continuously innovated and created new designs, and was an incredible guitar-making talent and force, but he was a better person. This is how I will always remember him."

Benefits in Sakashta's Memory

Local luthier friends have moved to set up a memorial trust fund for Sakashta's next of kin. For information on making a donation to the trust, contact luthier and Sakashta mentor Ervin Somogyi at esomogyi@aol.com.

In addition to cash donations, members of the gear community are planning an auction of materials, tools and instruments. Anyone wishing to contribute items for auction can send them to Tom Ribbecke, who will store them until they can be sold together with Sakashta's tools and woods—which will happen as soon as family and friends can organize the effort. These donations can be sent to either Ribbecke Guitars or Two-Rock Amplification (contact info is below).

Sakashta Memorial Fund c/o Ribbecke Guitars
498-D Moore Lane
Healdsburg, CA 95448
(707) 431-0125

Taku Donation c/o Two-Rock Amplifiers
619 Martin Ave. Ste.6
Rohnert Park, CA 94928
(707) 584-8663

A Z.Vex Super-Duper pedal with custom paint job for the new Museum of Making Music *The Art of the Stompbox* exhibit. Pedal painted and photographed by Hannah Haugberg

Museum of Making Music to Host Stompbox Exhibition

By Rebecca Dirks

Carlsbad, CA – The Museum of Making Music, which was established by the NAMM Foundation in 1998, has announced the opening of the special exhibition *The Art of the Stompbox* in May.

The exhibition will trace the development and use of effects pedals in American music and showcase pedals from the early 1940s to present. It also chronicles the boutique pedal movement and the handpainted, printed and sculpted pedals that have emerged from it. Attendees will also be able to see a film on the use and culture of stompboxes produced by Henry Kaiser and featuring Wilco guitarist Nels Cline.

The exhibition was developed by Henry Kaiser, UC San Diego's Jacobs School of Rock and Department of Visual Arts, as well as interdisciplinary students from UCSD.

museumofmakingmusic.com

2010 Crossroads Festival Lineup Announced, Show Sells Out

By Rebecca Dirks

Chicago, IL – Within the span of two weeks, Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival lineup was announced and then sold out. It is to be held Saturday, June 26, 2010, at Toyota Park in Chicago, Ill., and like the 2004 and 2007 shows, the lineup is incredible. Notable performers include Clapton himself, B.B. King, Jeff Beck, Buddy Guy, John Mayer, ZZ Top, the Allman Brothers Band, Steve Winwood, Sonny Landreth, Vince Gill, Jimmie Vaughan, Bert Jansch, Albert Lee, Robert Cray, David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos, Doyle Bramhall II, Earl Klugh, Robert Randolph, Gary Clark Jr., Hubert Sumlin, James Burton, Joao Gilberto,

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High-school session attendees work on their guitars at Purdue University's 2009 guitar-building workshop.

Joe Bonamassa, Jonny Lang, Keb Mo, Pino Daniele, Sheryl Crow and Stefan Grossman.

You can win a chance to play at the festival in a contest sponsored by Ernie Ball and *Premier Guitar*. The contest begins March 15, and the winner will play on the Ernie Ball festival stage—which will also feature clinics by Albert Lee, Joe Bonamassa, Robert Randolph and more.

crossroadsguitarfestival.com
playcrossroads.com

Purdue University's 2010 Guitar-Building Workshop Returns with New Session for Girls

By Rebecca Dirks

West Lafayette, IN – Purdue University's summer guitar-building workshops have returned for their fourth year with a new twist for 2010. The university still offers its usual adult workshop and High School Guitar Workshop, but it is also adding a Girls Rock High School Guitar Workshop targeted at teaching luthiery to female students.

Many of the high-school workshop attendees come from regional high schools, but the courses are open to students from all over the country. Tuition for high-school sessions is $950 and includes the custom electric guitar each student builds, supervised lodging accommodations, meals and a gig bag and T-shirt.

The adult session tuition is $1450 and includes a custom electric with figured wood, Seymour Duncan pickups, Fender hardware and high-quality components. The adult session also includes classes with industry experts.

Workshop Dates:
Girls Rock High School Workshop:
June 28 – July 2, 2010
High School Workshop: July 12 – 16, 2010
Adult Workshop: July 26 – 30, 2010

metalsound.org

Carter/Poulsen Guitars Debuts Acoustic Line

By Rebecca Dirks

Santa Cruz, CA – Guitar-industry veterans Willie Carter and Eric Poulsen launched their new joint company in January 2010. The two builders aim to combine the best of traditional building techniques and modern technology for consistent quality and performance in steel-string acoustics.

"Our tag line, 'Modern classic,' speaks to our approach," says Carter. "The use of cutting-edge technology is typically reserved for the large production shops, and classic techniques are often reserved for very small production shops. One of our goals was to mate the two and create an instrument that has the advantages of modern manufacturing, with the characteristics that attract players to vintage instruments. It's truly the best of both worlds."

The company launched with three models. The g-model is inspired by vintage 00 14-fret guitars, the t-model combines the comfort and balance of a small-bodied acoustic with the volume of larger guitars, and the j-model features a larger body with "a contemporary synthesis of several proven traditional designs."

carterpoulsenguitars.com

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ON | OFF | STBY

The editors of PREMIERGuitar offer up some unsolicited opinions about guitars and six-string life.

Much Respect for LP – A number of stars in the guitar universe are lining up to pay tribute to Les Paul at his regular Monday night Iridium gig in NYC: Zakk Wylde, Vernon Reid, John Jorgenson, Jeff Baxter, Stanley Jordan and Martin Taylor. How High the Moon, indeed.

Convenient Battery Compartments – Cheers to the growing number of effects manufacturers using easy-access battery compartments. There's no reason we should be using screwdrivers to change batteries in 2010.

John Mayer Loses It – After using the "N-word" in a *Playboy* interview (among other gratuitously controversial statements), Mayer broke down on stage at a Nashville concert saying, "I just want to play my guitar." Funny, that's all we want you to do, too.

Ticketmaster/Live Nation Merger – The Justice Department has finally approved the merger of the ticket selling/artist management and concert promotion behemoths. It's too early to tell if this new beast of a vertically-aligned entertainment juggernaut, called Live Nation Entertainment, is a good thing for both artists and music fans.

Abbey Road Studio on Thin Ice – EMI denied rampant rumors that they were putting Abbey Road Studio for sale, but admitted they were looking for financial help. On February 23, the British government granted protected status as a historical building. Still nervous from the seemingly close call, we're crossing our fingers that we've heard the last of the rumors.

WEBWHISPERS

A sampling of what we've heard on premierguitar.com in the past month

"…Its about time the guitar public were made aware of the fact that not all rack gear was poorly made or poor sounding..."

– Home, on "Back in the Rack: The Return of Lee Jackson's GP-1000," March 2010

"I know this will freak some people out but lowering the single coil pickups on a Strat will help your tone immensely and give you more sustain. Less magnetic pull lets the strings vibrate freely. Just turn up the amp or a boost pedal to get more volume. Try it, you'll like it."

– Epidrake, on "The Art of Pickup Adjustment," March 2010

"i like pie. roger fritz makes Amazing pie."

– rodrigo, on "Roger Fritz: Helping Resurrect the Classic Kay Guitar Line," March 2010

"There is NO such thing as the perfect guitar sound. Matter of fact the perfect guitar sound doesnt exist on its own. A sound or tone is only perfect with in the context of a song that creates the perfect mood that you as the listener can identify with. You may even fall in love with that moment, and when you play guitar with that tone you are associating the two. but over time as you grow and more tones comes your way your create YOU. A truly gifted guitar player knows different tones they know when and how to use them to evoke emotion from you (and sell records)."

– Kmac, on "The Psychology of Tone, February 2010

"Picked one of these little beauties up yesterday. Plugged it into my Mac and was jamming in about 10 minutes. Like having a gig 24/7. Awesome."

– Allan Verrey, on "Boss eBand JS-8 Review," March 2010

"nice!. i got a harmony rocket, a kay archtop electric and a cool silvertone parlor guitar!"

– Charlie Shea, on "Funky, Cheap Electrics: Formerly Low End Kitsch... Now Cool Collectibles," March 2010

Comments from the web are not edited for grammar.
Want to see yours in PG? Get on premierguitar.com and say smart stuff.

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Leeds NEW FOR 2010

We're talkin' 'bout our generation of loudmouth yobbo tones. Rich bell-like clean tones that drove the classic UK rock and pop bands of the '70s. Lean into high gain gear for a bare-knuckle growl that retains definition. Push it harder and you are live at Leeds.

Oxford NEW FOR 2010

Experience T-rextacy with the greasy grit of '70s London glam, or take it deeper and darker into Paranoid vintage metal grind. Dime the gain to experience the sludgelicious roar of contemporary stoner rock. From sweet cleans to crushing distortion, the Oxford is one juicy pedal.

US Steel NEW FOR 2010

Packing more metal than Pittsburgh, the U.S. Steel is high gain Valhalla. Every nu-metal chunk, every modern rock slab just keep coming. Back off for smoky blues or ignite the rage of an uber-gain rectifier. The U.S. Steel is here to raise hell and steal your girl.

British

Legendary crunch from searing blues to UK anarchy.

Liverpool

Distinctive diamond grille tone with a voice that shook generations.

Blonde

This Blonde dishes out pure American tone to the stratosphere.

California

Everything you need to create your own California dream tone.

VT Bass

Clean focused punch to dirty earthquaking rump, you dial it in.

VT Bass Deluxe NEW FOR 2010

The Deluxe version of the SansAmp VT Bass features a combination of a warm, all-analog signal path and convenient digital recall. There are 6 program locations and dual inputs for two instruments to be on-line, ready to go. Create three custom tones for each input or use all six locations for a single instrument.

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STAFF PICKS

This month, we wrap up our three-part exploration of the different sides of tone with "The Cult of Tone" [pg. 136]. Fascinated by the near-religious fervor that surrounds certain guitarists, albums and pieces of gear, we're tackling the question, "What is your Holy Trinity of Tone?" in this month's Staff Picks. We also posed this question on our Facebook and Twitter (@premierguitar) accounts and found that the differing approaches to the answer were almost as interesting as the answers themselves. Is it three iconic instruments? Your ideal signal chain? Tones from specific albums? The most heroic of guitar heroes? We left that decision up to each individual, and enlisted a man who knows tone, Nashville's hottest session picker, Brent Mason, as our Guest Picker.

Chris Burgess

Senior Editor

What am I listening to?

Rich Tozzoli's first solo record, *Rhythm Up*. I knew it would sound great, but I didn't know it would be so much fun.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

Depends on the day… today it's *Queen II*, *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* and *Outlandos d'Amour*.

Joe Coffey

Editorial Director

What am I listening to?

Joe Bonamassa's *Black Rock*. JB lays it down with authority while showing some other-worldly influences.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

Hendrix, Page, Beck. Bring on the hate mail from the Claptonites.

Shawn Hammond

Editor in Chief

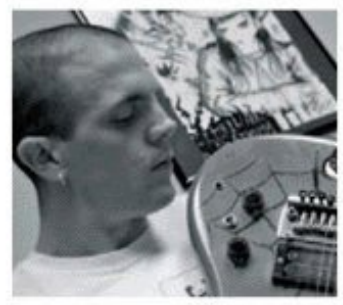
What am I listening to?

The Kinks, *BBC Sessions 1964-1977*. I always loved the go-to classics, but I'm just discovering how remarkably eclectic they were.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

Guitars: Anything funky that avoids the same-ol', same-ol'. Amps: All-tube with Fender- or Vox-style cleans, cavernous reverb, and minimal controls. Effects: Fulltone OCD, Demeter Tremulator, Maxon AD999 analog delay, and anything that makes freaky-ass noise.

Chris Kies



Associate Editor

What am I listening to?

William Elliott Whitmore's *Animals in the Dark*. He tells both downtrodden and uplifting stories through his gravelly, weathered voice over simple yet effective licks on his acoustic and banjo.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

It has to be Scotty Moore on "Too Much," Darrell Dimebag Abbott on "Mouth for War" and Scott Gorham on "Emerald."

Jordan Wagner

Associate Gear Editor

What am I listening to?

Droids Attack, *Must Destroy*—total kick-ass, straight-up, honest heavy rock from one of the best new bands in the Midwest.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

Does three words count? Then they'd have to be "Drop Dead Legs," the finest example of perfect guitar tone ever recorded.

GUEST PICKER

Brent Mason

Nashville Session King

What am I listening to?

Just lately I have been listening a lot to Steely Dan (my favorite compilation I've put together), Stevie Wonder (*Innervisions*, *Songs in the Key of Life*), Merle Haggard (all of his older albums) and Keith Jarrett (*Standards*). When I'm in my car driving home… sports radio!

Holy Trinity of Tone:

1. Finding the best marriage between an amp and a guitar, depending on the style you're playing. I find that vintage amps or guitars always sound better than the "new and improved" stuff, if you keep them well maintained.
2. Finding the right effects pedals to get the sound you're going for—and knowing when to use them and when not.
3. Last but not least, the basic, most important thing: your technique, or "touch." Somebody told Chet Atkins after he finished playing that his "guitar sounded great." Pointing to it sitting in its guitar case, he replied, "How's it sound now?" Kinda sums it up, don't ya think?

Steve Ouimette

Web Columnist, "Hey, You Can't Do That!" & Reviewer

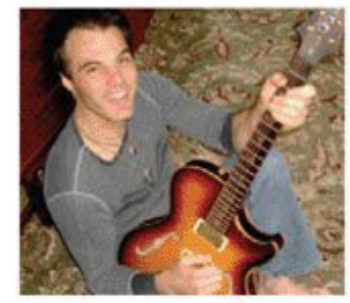
What am I listening to?

Green Day, *21st Century Breakdown*. From start to finish this album is a masterpiece. Not only are the songs great, the theme carries throughout, and Butch Vig raised the bar for production. I've probably listened to this no less than 100 times.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

Ace Frehley… Les Paul… Marshall Super Lead. To be more specific, *KISS Alive!* —Ace Frehley with a mid-'70s Les Paul Standard with DiMarzio Super Distortion humbucker, metal-panel Marshall Super Lead, Marshall 4x12s with Celestion blackbacks!

John Bohlinger



Columnist, "Last Call" & Reviewer

What am I listening to?

Right now I'm just listening to music for work. Between learning songs for a film, working with a new artist and a March 1st USO tour in Kuwait, there's no time for leisure music.

Holy Trinity of Tone:

Mark Knopfler, 1978, Strat mode; Brent Mason, any records in the past ten years; Van Halen, 1978.

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Most guitar historians and collectors consider the 1959 Les Paul Standard the "holy grail" of not only Les Pauls, but of *all* electric guitars. To commemorate this legendary masterpiece, Epiphone introduces the Limited Edition "1959" Les Paul Standard. With a history going back to the 1940's when Les Paul himself would visit the Epiphone factory in New York and work on what would become the "first" electric guitar, the '59 Limited Edition pays homage to the man who started it all.

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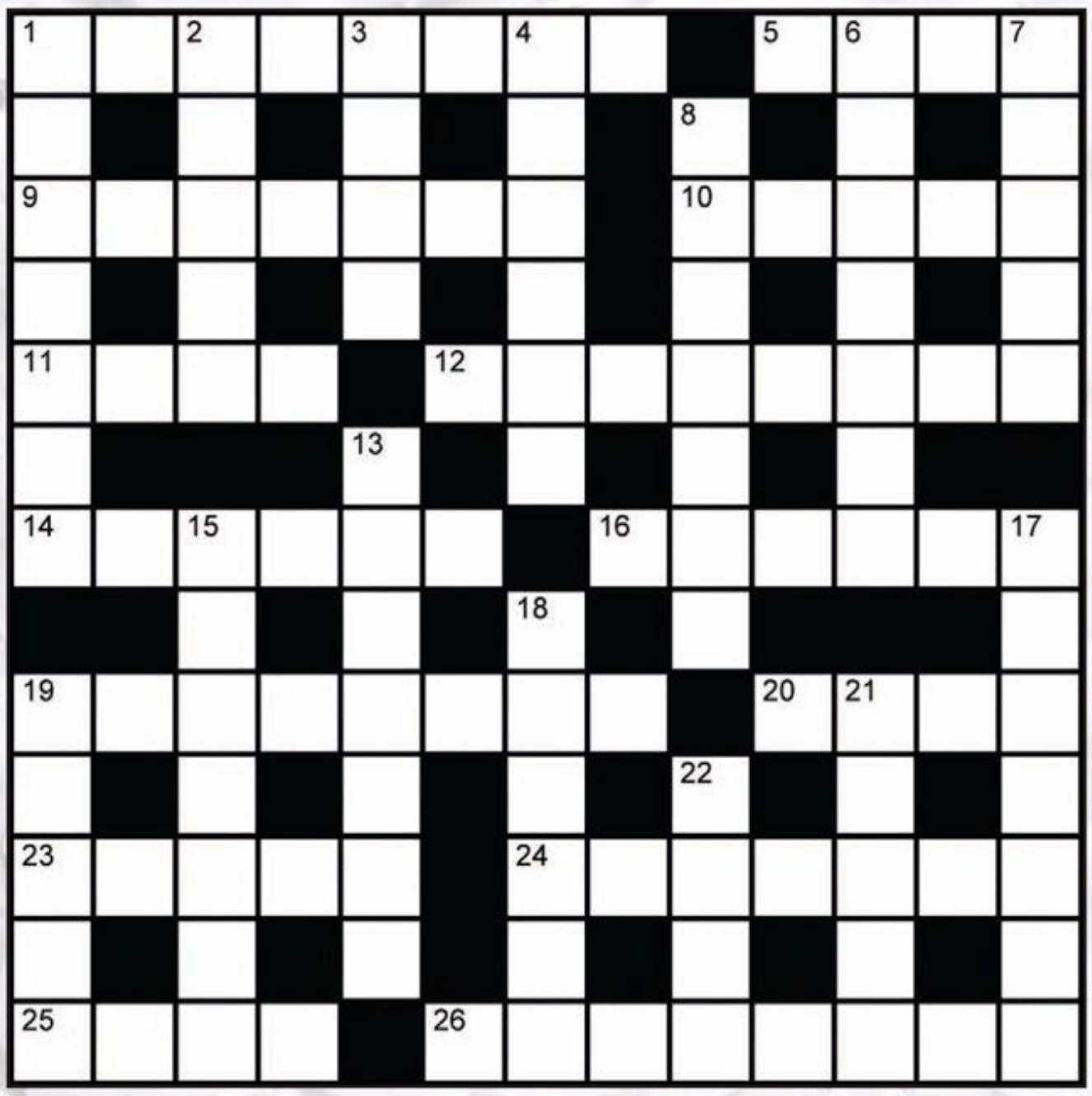
NOODLING

As guitarists, we can't take ourselves seriously all the time. You gotta know when to dig in and when to chill out. In that spirit, we offer this monthly page of fun diversions. Have fun, and check **page 189** for the answers.

PG CROSSWORD



©Premier Guitar, 2010. Puzzle by Murray Jackson

Across

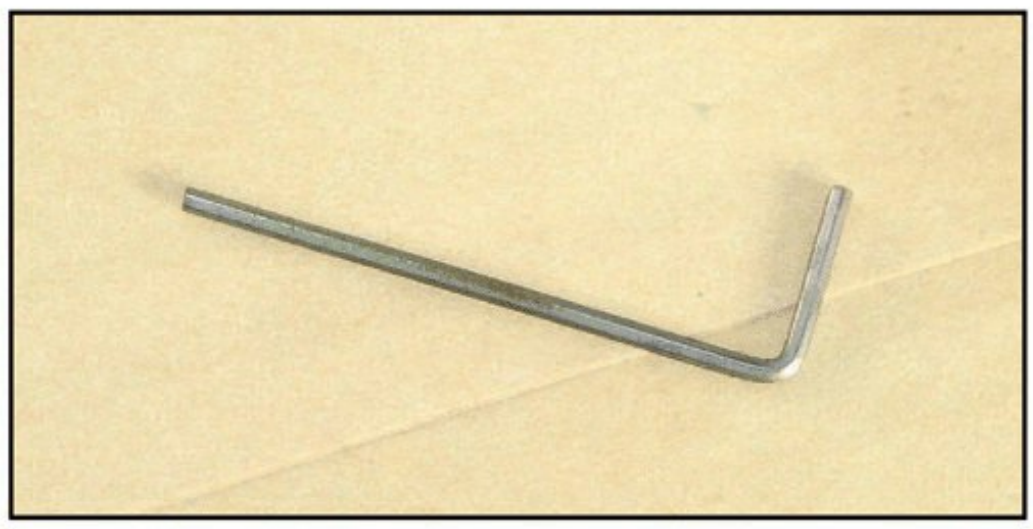
1. Chuck Berry's onstage strut
5. Amp-head adjuncts, briefly
9. Sometimes-slotted tuning-machine component
10. Reinforcement under acoustic-guitar top
11. Big name in effects pedals
12. Lindsey Buckingham's Turner guitar (5,3)
14. Washington state-based pickup maker
16. Common amp control
19. Beginning guitarist's aspiration, perhaps (4,4)
20. Neck portion at body joint
23. Son House's genre, ____ blues
24. Guitarist David Howell Evans' nickname (3,4)
25. Legendary fingerstyle player Jerry ____
26. Grateful Dead fan, colloquially (4,4)

Down

1. Unit of sound loudness
2. Guitarists' key-changing gizmos
3. Amp-output unit
4. Fab Four guitarist
6. Common fretboard inlay material
7. Hagstrom model introduced in 1970
8. Concert-loudness measuring instrument (1,1,5)
13. Fender amp introduced in 1952
15. B.B.'s axe
17. Common guitar-string feature (4,3)
18. Brand on Kickback combo amp
19. Document describing performer's requirements
21. Van Halen's first name
22. 1979-1982 Fender guitar series

WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?

This month's mystery comes from Tim Mullally's workbench at Dave's Guitar Shop in La Crosse, WI. Do you know what this is?



JOKE OF THE MONTH

Q. Why are there four strings on a bass?

A. Three are spares.

Q. How many guitar players does it take to cover a Stevie Ray Vaughan song?

A. Evidently all of them.

Submit yours at twitter.com/premierguitar or email it to submissions@premierguitar.com.

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Bruno & Oberg Jazz Guitar Summit on YouTube

This month's web diversion is an fascinating video series that ArtistWorks is in the middle of presenting, featuring jazz guitar masters Jimmy Bruno and Andreas Oberg. The two were brought together at ArtistWorks' Napa, CA, headquarters as an experiment: put two jazz masters and complete strangers together to prepare a show in just four days. The entire experience was taped and is now being presented in a massive 20-part series on YouTube.

The series begins as Bruno and Oberg meet for the first time. As Bruno states, "Sometimes you can get two really good musicians together and it doesn't necessarily mean we're going to play well together." Heightening the tension in that regard is the fact that Bruno and Oberg couldn't be more different on the surface; Oberg is tall, young ("The same age as my son!" Bruno noted), Swedish and classically trained, while Bruno is short, Italian and self-taught. Of course, there wouldn't be a 20-part video series if they didn't play well together.

After exchanging jokes, the two picked up guitars and started feeling each other out—and that's when the first video gets good. It's a rare opportunity to watch two masters feeling each other out and settling into a groove, and that's exactly what the first few videos provide. "It's like having a conversation with someone," Oberg commented early on, "you throw the ball back and forth—it's been great." The videos show largely the uncut experience—every mistake, stumble and missed connection, though those are few.

The video and audio quality are really great and showcase these guys' pure skill—not to mention the gorgeous tones pouring out of Bruno's signature Sadowsky and Oberg's Benedetto. At press time, ArtistsWorks was on the sixth video in the series. We recommend starting from the beginning, as some of the most endearing moments happen as they get acquainted in the first few videos. By the time they hit a good stride and start working on tunes in the later videos, you'll be waiting anxiously to hear their final performance. Luckily, you don't have to wait long, because ArtistWorks gives you a portion of the Silo's Jazz Club performance in the sixth video.

youtube.com/artistworksinc

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GO AHEAD AND ASK LINE 6

The Line 6 Variax 700, released in 2004, brought a carved ash top and translucent finishes to the popular series of modeling guitars.

BY JOE COFFEY

Some of us make gear, some of us play it, and in our case, some of us work at a media company that aims to keep everyone informed. That's why we facilitate this discussion every month. There are certain conversations that need to take place just between us gearheads.

We thought it made a lot of sense to get a dialogue going between you, the *Premier Guitar* reader, and the engineers at Line 6. The company is best known for its significant contributions within the realm of digital modeling. Based out of Calabasas, CA, Line 6's gear offerings cover the gamut, ranging from guitars to pedals to amps to wireless systems and more. It is the POD, of course, that paved the way for many of the company's product lines. Still going strong after first hitting the market more than 10 years ago, the POD's ability to give guitarists easy access to a slew of amp models and effects, all within a highly-portable kidney bean-shaped device, changed the way many hobbyists and professionals approach tone.

We remember a day when many players scoffed at the idea of 1s and 0s being practical ingredients for shaping tone. Those purists are decreasing in number, though. It's just too easy to make good use of digital technology, whether it's via an amp chock full o' tones, an amazingly versatile pedal, post-production tweaking in a DAW, dialing in settings onboard your guitar or lining up tonal combinations for an entire gig within a single floor unit.

Although a certain part of the gear industry will always believe that technology and evolution are bad things, the other part of the industry continues to move forward. Quite frankly, this seems an opportune time to put Line 6 in the "Go Ahead and Ask" hot seat. Following are the questions you submitted (selected by our editors from a pool of online submissions) and the answers from the gearheads over at Line 6.

1. Do you guys have a glorious stash of gear that all your models are based on? Can I enter this chamber and play around? Please?

Yes, we have a pretty awesome collection of amps and effects units that our sound engineers base their modeling on. A favorite amp of ours is a 1953 Fender Wide Panel Deluxe that we call "Julia." If you are ever in Calabasas, CA, come by and we'll tell you the story.

2. I'm a huge fan of the Variax guitars and basses. I'm wondering if there are any plans to create new, updated versions of those instruments?

We have just checked with our attorneys, and we can't say anything about unreleased products.

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The ultra-portable Pod revolutionized recording and performing with a smorgasbord of impressive amp and effect models for a rock-bottom price.

3. With all the developments in modeling technology by other companies, what do you guys have planned to take things to the next level?

As pioneers in this space, we like to think we are continually pushing the limits on what our gear can do and what we deliver to our customers. We are continually refining and developing our amp and effects modeling to deliver more than what the competition does. The most recent examples are a free software update we just released for POD X3, which includes 12 new effects, including a Vocoder (because the POD X3 Live has a mic input, how cool). We've also recently introduced Spider IV and Spider Valve MK II amp lines, which in addition to offering 16 amp models, up to 4 Smart FX simultaneously, and hundreds of presets, has our new Smart Harmony effect that can perform diatonic harmony for any root note (A through G♯) from a unison to a ninth interval above or below the root note. You'll definitely want to check that out.

4. Does Line 6 intend to pull people away from analog effects and tube amplifiers over time, or is the intent to focus on selling better and more gear to players who are already fans of digital and modeling equipment?

The answer is not either/or. There are a lot of players who are immediately drawn to digital modeling for the ability to have access to a vast array of authentic-sounding tones and effects. Then there are those who reluctantly come around when they are exposed to our digital modeling through friends and fellow players and are surprised by the quality of the modeling and convenience and flexibility of our gear. These are people who don't believe it until they see it, and we hope to expose as many of these people to our gear as possible.

5. Many of us feel that amp emulation is the future of electric guitar, but that it isn't 100 percent there yet. When do you think amp emulation will be so good that even the old-timers will give it their stamp of approval, and what will it take to get there?

At Line 6, we recognize that tone is subjective, and the gear you use to get your tone is a personal choice. In other words, nothing is right for everyone, but we are never content with ourselves and are always striving to improve our gear to make it as appealing to as many players as possible. We are overwhelmed by the number of players who rely on Line 6 gear across all genres, ages and levels—from amateur players we see on YouTube to touring pros like Brad Paisley, Trent Reznor and The Edge—to get the tone they want.

6. I'm wondering if it is possible to combine a Variax, an X3, a Backtrack, and a Relay into one single monstrous, cohesive system of gear (to go with my own amp of choice)? Are you guys working on this?

Hmmmm… a guitar that models everything, captures everything and then transmits everything wirelessly to an amp. That sounds cool. We'll call it the GuiPODiaX3TrackLay. We're going to get right on it.

7. Are there any plans for a lower-wattage version of the Bogner Spider amps? Many people do not need a full 40 or 100 watts, but a 15-watt, affordable version with maybe a 2x10 cab would be awesome.

The Spider Valve Mk II is our newest version of the Line 6 partnership with Bogner, which combines Line 6 digital modeling and Bogner tube design. The great thing about these amps is that because of the modeling and tube design, they sound great even without pushing the tubes. For these amps you don't need a lower wattage to get a great sound at a lower volume.

8. Do you plan on releasing just the Variax guitar hardware sometime in the future, so players can just install it in the guitar of their choice?

Wow, you guys are really into the Variax. We really wish we could say something, but we can't.

9. What is the reason your Spider series comes without a Variax direct digital input?

In order to keep our Spider amps as affordable as possible, sometimes we have to make tough decisions about what features to include and exclude. This is a feature we have included on some of our higher-end—and more expensive—gear, but felt it was a smart trade-off to make in order to keep the Spider amps priced in a range where the most people could afford them.

10. Are you going to release new Variax models include 24 frets and an advanced tremolo system?

All right, we get the picture… you guys want a new Variax. Well we're about to announce something that has been in the works for several years, and it is going to make you very happy. Check Line6.com for updates.

Next month:
For next month's "Go Ahead and Ask," head online to **premierguitar.com/goaheadandask** and let us know what questions you'd like to ask Bob Taylor of Taylor Guitars.

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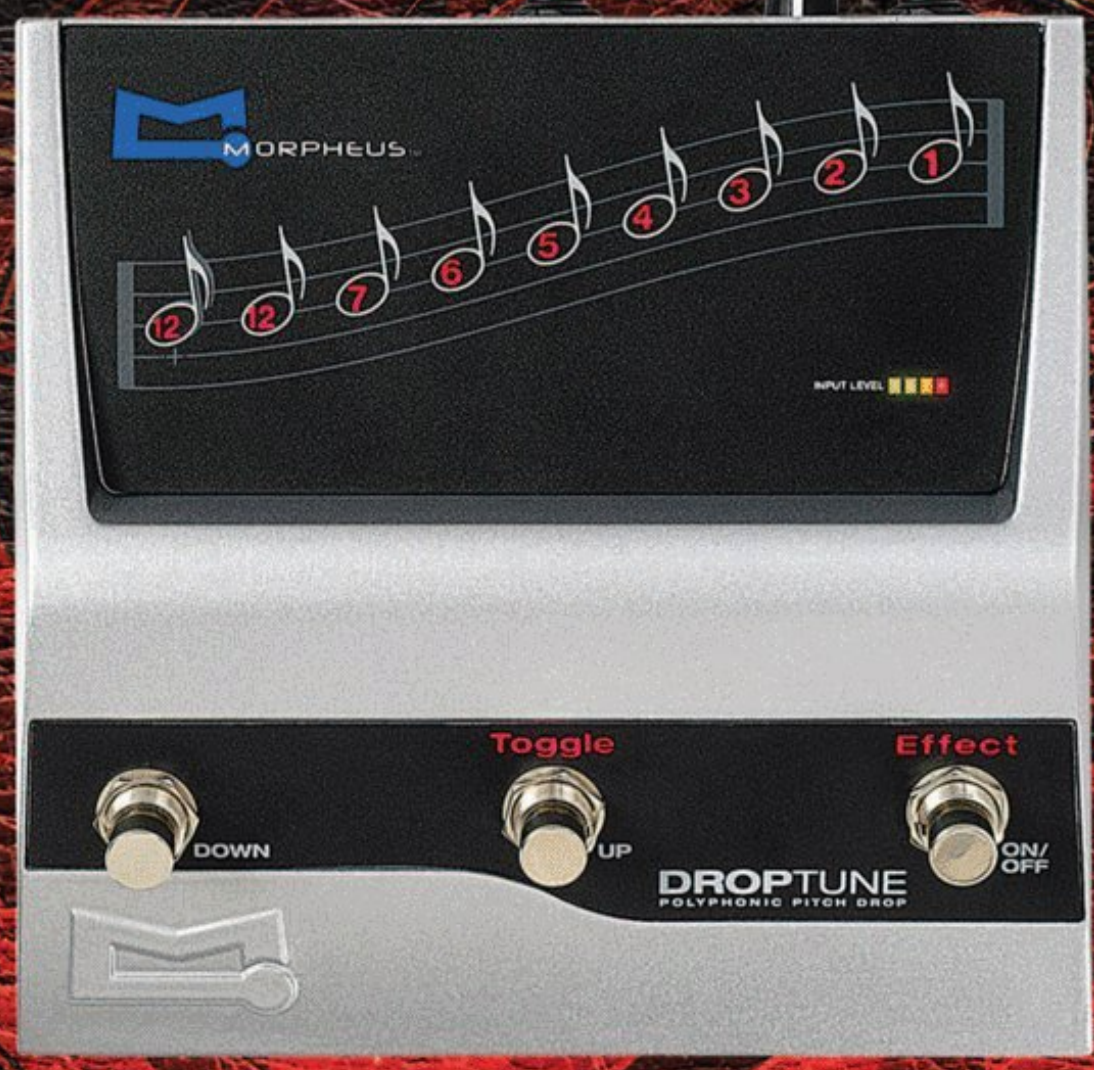

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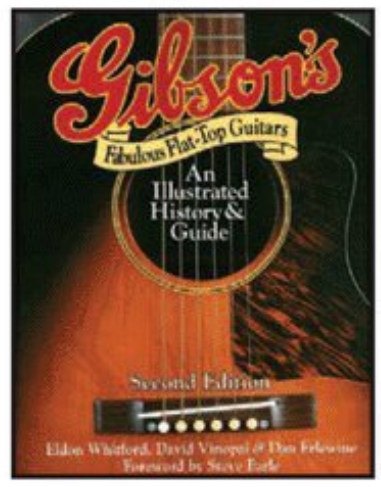
PG MEDIA Preview

BY CHRIS KIES, CHRIS BURGESS AND MICHAEL ROSS

Books

Gibson's Fabulous Flat-Top Guitars— An Illustrated History & Guide

By Eldon Whitford, David Vinopal and Dan Erlewine



Pretty much since their inception in 1926 in Kalamazoo, MI, Gibson acoustics have been a badge of pride for the company. To celebrate these highly sought-after acoustics, authors Dan Erlewine, Eldon Whitford and David Vinopal collaborated on this 220-page book showcasing the cherished flat-tops and chronicling their history and use by all kinds of pickers. From the L-5 and the J-200 to the various Starburst models, these acoustics are analyzed and spec's out in *Gibson's Fabulous Flat-Top Guitars*. Erlewine, Whitford and Vinopal live and breathe Gibson flat-tops, as you can tell from their exhaustive facts, specs and backstories. In addition, they weave a narrative of the company's trail from Kalamazoo to Nashville and finally to Bozeman, MT, that encapsulates the company's logistical transitions and ownership changes.

While Bozeman, MT, is known by many for its mountains—Big Sky Ski Resort and the Museum of the Rockies—acoustic guitar enthusiasts have known the small northwestern city as the home to Gibson's flat-top factory since 1989. And in the last third of the book, Erlewine, Whitford and Vinopal help acquaint us with new Gibson acoustics—from descriptive details on wood choice, bracing techniques and overall building philosophy—as well as the small, talented crew that makes them. Illustrated with over 200 black-and-white photos, plus two 16-page color inserts, this book provides an enjoyable look at the evolution of Gibson flat-tops, from their humble beginnings to custom shop one-offs. It also includes numerous reference charts showing which styles were produced where and when, as well as detailed serial-number info, basic repair instructions and historical trivia. —CK

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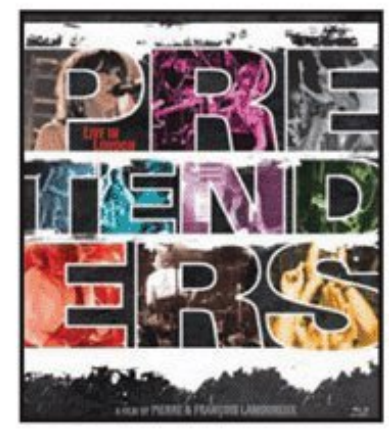
Videos

Pretenders: Live in London



A completely live recording with no overdubs, the *Live in London* DVD was filmed at O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in London, in July 2009, during a European leg of the Pretenders tour in support of 2008's pioneering *Break up the Concrete*. Fans of the reinvigorated and thrilling sound of the band's latest incarnation will get plenty of what they're hankering for, since if anything, the live versions of its songs are even more raw and reduced to the essentials. From the punk-inflected rockabilly of "Boots of Chinese Plastic" and "Don't Cut Your Hair" that open the show like a shot across the bow, to the country/roots-rock tint of "Love's a Mystery" and "The Nothing Maker" and the bluesy barrelhouse strut of "Rosalee" and "Don't Lose Faith in Me," the group's performance is tight and sparing and unselfishly serves the superb songwriting. Long-time followers of the band will find much to like as well, with a long list of Pretenders classics also being subjected to the stripped-down treatment—from the pop hits like "Back On The Chain Gang" "Don't Get Me Wrong" "Middle Of The Road" to the early fan faves "Kid," "Talk Of The Town," "Brass In Pocket" and the spastic time-signature eccentricities of "Tattooed Love Boys."

The new Pretenders lineup—featuring guitarist James Walbourne, bassist Nick Wilkinson and pedal steel player Eric Heywood alongside original Pretenders drummer Martin Chambers and the real doyenne of rock chicks, Chrissie Hynde—is stunningly good and a delight to watch. Throughout the show, they deliver their tightly interlocking performances with a mixture of triumphal exhuberance and grinning amusement. It's fun to watch a band have this much fun. Hynde herself is in top form, projecting all of her intensity and mesmerizing stage presence into the music. With a minimum of stage banter, she holds court in the rather intimate venue and makes the 100-minute set seem to pass like the blink of an eye. If you're a fan of the Pretenders, this is a must-have, but if you simply relish the savor of a no-bullshit presentation from a group of accomplished musicians, this will in no way dissapoint. —CB

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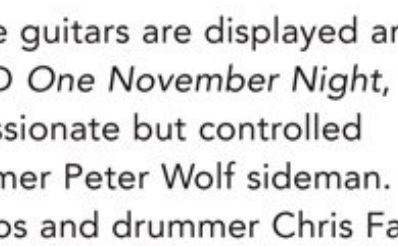
Johnny A. —One November Night



Guitarists with a distinctive sound are as rare as natural beauty in Hollywood. Since going strictly instrumental, Johnny A. has quickly joined the rarified ranks of players like Jeff Beck, Bill Frisell, and Carlos Santana, as far as being recognizable from the first note. He has created a unique voice through a mix of idiosyncratic arrangements, running his Marshall heads direct, and ultimately designing his own guitar (with the Custom Shop crew at Gibson).

A number of those guitars are displayed and played on the DVD *One November Night*, along with the passionate but controlled picking of this former Peter Wolf sideman. Bassist Jesse Bastos and drummer Chris Farr demonstrate how a well-rehearsed, supportive rhythm section adds much to the show. And a show it is; despite being welded to his stool, and the absence of computerized lighting or smoke effects, A. demonstrates that superb playing, great tone, and thoughtful pacing are enough to keep an audience's interest. Sure it is his hometown crowd, but the intimate club performance leaps off the screen, putting you right in the front row at Boston's Scullers Jazz Club.

The package features a DVD and a CD. All but one of the DVD's tunes—a version of "Walk Away Renee" played in the great outdoors—is offered on the CD. Four of the tunes on the CD are replaced on the DVD by short interview segments largely devoted to general biographical information rather than gear or performance talk. Still, players will not be disappointed; the sound is excellent and the camera angles amply reveal both left hand and right hand techniques providing an unexpected Johnny A. lesson.

Even more unusual than a distinctive sound, is an instrumental guitarist whose appeal extends beyond other guitarists. Johnny A.'s magic crosses over because, like Frisell, he doesn't just play guitar—he plays music. —MR

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Recording Is a Battlefield, Part 1

The music industry has changed radically from the days of cassette tapes. We now download music from the internet, share music for free, and with the help of any computer, we can have a full-on recording setup for a few hundred dollars. Everyone and their mother is making music, playing music, and downloading music. Because of all this, the recording industry has changed drastically as well. Gone are the days when you needed a major-label recording budget to work in a world-famous studio. Those studios have been dying off for the past ten years. What's left these days are a few major studios that can barely afford to stay open and thousands of personal recording studios: small one-room workstation studios for rent in business buildings, bedroom studios and laptop studios. My friends, it's a free for all out there; recording is a battlefield.

Personally, I've recorded in every environment from the largest and most expensive rooms money can buy to just a guitar plugged straight into a laptop. I started out recording with a 4-track machine as a kid, worked my way up to way too many singer/songwriters sessions (in every studio setting imaginable), spent almost two months recording a major-label album (I was the guitarist in the band) that cost around $500,000. I've worked with other major-label artists as a session guitarist, and done tons of recording at home with my personal setup. Whether it's recording demos in the best studios in the world or using a Line 6 POD straight into Pro Tools for Saturday Night Live's recorded segments, the place and method don't matter anymore. What matters is the product. In order to get the best product, I've found that the keys to success are: being prepared, having the right tools for any recording situation, and knowing how to work in any of these environments.

Through the years, I've had to figure out what's important to bring to any type of session. I learned as I went, and each session taught me more about what was important. Obviously, there are too many musical styles and playing styles—not to mention reasons for being hired—to go into all of these tools. For example, I wouldn't be hired to do a lap steel session for a country artist. That's just not something I do. What I would like to focus on is general session work, ranging from pop music and singer/songwriters to commercials and rock. These are the sorts of things I've been called in to do.

Arm Your Weapons

First and foremost, choose your main weapon carefully. When you bring a guitar, it needs to be one you're completely comfortable with and one that's in top recording shape. I've had to do sessions where only one of my guitars was with me, and the producer didn't have any other guitars available. At that point, it's clutch to know how to coax different sounds out of your instrument, how it will sound best, and how to make it sound like you have different guitars in the session if need be. In any session, you must make sure your guitar is properly setup and well intonated. If it's poorly intonated, you have half a guitar—anything above the 9th fret is most likely unusable, and you'll spend half the session tuning to the notes you're trying to play up on the fretboard. This will not only aggravate and frustrate the producer and the artist, but you as well, and the vibe (and your headspace) will be broken.

Second, bring two guitars or more whenever possible. For your second guitar, it's best to bring something with a completely different sound, so you have a variety to choose from. One thing that has always worked well for me is to talk to the producer beforehand about what they're looking for. If they only want rock 'n' roll à la AC/DC, then its more likely you should bring a Gibson Les Paul or an SG and leave the Telecaster home. Once you know the style and sound they're going for, you can choose the appropriate instruments. Personally, I always bring a Stratocaster. That's what I'm most comfortable playing and what I know how to use best. I like to bring one Stratocaster (typically my Nash Strat) and something that has a humbucker pickup for more rock type stuff. A general rule of thumb: one guitar with single-coil pickups and one with humbuckers. That should cover most needs.

If you have a certain style and a certain rig that you use get your sound, then that may be all you need. If you were someone like the Edge, where your schtick is delay pedals, chimey guitars, etc., then you should just bring the guitars you need to achieve your personal style. If your thing is chicken-pickin' country licks, and you're getting hired for just that, then there's no need to bring that Les Paul. I usually need to be a one-man guitar arsenal, so variety is a necessity. When I can, I'll bring one Strat, a Tele and a something with humbuckers. If you do that, they'll think you came prepared and that you have the tools to give them any style they need. It goes a long way.

> The guitars you bring to your session are your weapons. Choose them wisely, for you will be doing battle with them.

That is just the tip of the iceberg. The guitars you bring to your session are your weapons. Choose them wisely, for you will be doing battle with them. This is a huge part of recording. Next month, I'll be addressing some of the key accessories you need to have with you at all times to survive in the recording battlfield, so stay tuned. It's a jungle out there.

Jared Scharff

Jared Scharff has been the house guitarist for the legendary Saturday Night Live band for the last two years. A Native New Yorker, Jared is also a recording artist, producer, songwriter and highly sought-after session player, and has shared the stage with Justin Timberlake, Beyonce, Kid Rock, Rihanna, Mary J. Blige, Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, Roger McGuinn and Debbie Harry. For more information on Jared, go to myspace.com/jaredscharffmusic.

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RICH TOZZOLI

DPA 4099G Microphone

A DPA 4099G mounted on a Guild F-50.

This month, we'll take a look a cool little microphone I think *PG* readers should know about: the 4099G from DPA—a company that's well known in the recording and live community for its high-end mics. Part of the 4099 line of musical instrument mini-supercardiod condenser mics, which includes the 4099S (sax, brass and clarinet), 4099T (brass) and 4099V (violin and mandolin), the 4099G is designed for guitar, dobro, and the like. I've used it on many sessions recently, and it's become a staple of my acoustic recording rig. Let's get the price out of the way up front. With most other DPAs going for thousands, this one can be found for a $599 street price.

The 4099 series' mic sensitivities and mounting clips vary, depending on which model you use. Interestingly, this is designed as a live application mic, but I've found it's very useful in the studio. Most live acoustic users would use this in conjunction with a pickup system. The 4099G system is mounted on a clip attached to a flexible gooseneck that snaps to the body of the guitar. The connector is a proprietary MicroDot, which then connects to an XLR adapter/belt clip.

We all know that even the best internal pickups have sonic shortcomings, and I've found that blending with a 4099G (preferably placed around where the fretboard meets the soundhole) offers a more natural sound. Of course, there are issues with open mics and monitors or PA systems, but DPA designed this mic for a large amount of gain before feedback. The flexible gooseneck lets you push the mic in close, where you get more direct guitar volume.

Testing... One, Two

Wisely, DPA also offers an optional DAO4099G double cable, which includes a 4099 connection with a 1/4" pickup jack connector in one dual-cable run within a nylon sock. You can also use their DMM0007 universal surface mount to run the cable along your guitar. Of course, these will cost you more money, but they are worth it if you want to keep your lines clean. When running into a wireless system, DPA recommends using a low-cut filter at 80Hz in the transmitter to avoid handling noise. The mic itself has an 80Hz low-cut filter and, frequency-wise, it runs up to 15kHz. The max SPL before clipping is 142dB, so it can take some serious volume. My only gripe is that it's got a little bit of self-noise, especially when your preamp is cranked up. But I'll take the tradeoff for what it delivers sonically.

I use it in combination with other mics in the studio. I've gotten some killer acoustic sounds using the 4099G with a pair of Earthworks QTC-1s a few feet out and a few feet apart. It also sounds great using a Royer R121 ribbon on the body. The DPA offers a strong, clean center image, and the slight 2dB boost at 10-12kHz adds great sparkle on pick and finger presence. I used it on nylon. All instruments sounded better with the DPA in the mix than without it, which is a strong selling point to me. Like any other mic, the amount you blend it in will determine how strong the character is. But I find that the 10-12kHz boost helps acoustic parts find their place in a dense mix.

The small footprint means it doesn't get in the way of my other mics, and it also moves if the player moves. When recording myself, I tend to sit in an odd position. I sit my acoustics up high on my knee and pointing up in the air a bit, so the DPA stays right with me on the center image at all times. It's a minor but important touch that I appreciate.

I found the best results were achieved as DPA recommends, sitting it just where the fretboard meets the soundhole. But also I like the fact that I can sit with headphones on and move it around, play a bit and listen, and keep moving it until it hits the spot. In the studio, I can add a bit of extra gain with the preamp (which will bring up that self noise), but pushing it closer to the guitar also gets more direct response.

It's curious to me that I've found so many uses in the studio for a mic designed for live use. I've spoken with a few other respected engineers who use it in the studio as well, so I'm certainly not alone there. Overall, the 4099G is simply another sonic tool, albeit a small-profile, high-quality one. Personally, I've always been frustrated with most live acoustic guitar sounds. I'm looking forward to taking it out live soon, but until then, it's got a permanent home in my studio.

Rich Tozzoli

Rich is a Grammy-nominated engineer and mixer who has worked with artists ranging from Al DiMeola to David Bowie. A life-long guitarist, he's also the author of *Pro Tools Surround Sound Mixing* and composes for the likes of Fox NFL, Discovery Channel, Nickelodeon and HBO.

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RICH ECKHARDT

Recording at Home

When you record, do you find yourself asking time and again, "Why does my tone sound so thin on playback when it sounded perfectly good out of the amp?" It's an ongoing challenge for guitarists to try and track their tone. A few months back, I talked a little about some of the techniques I used to mic and record my guitars on my *Cottage City Firehouse* CD. This month we'll reach deeper into the fire as I share some bits that will help you capture better guitar tones in the studio.

These days we're able to make wonderful-sounding recordings for less money than ever. My gadget of choice is Pro Tools, but there are many other recording applications and devices out there that are affordable and easy to use. You don't have to be a graduate of a recording institute to capture good sounds. With a few proper microphones and a couple of tricks of the trade you can get your guitars to sound as big as Texas. One thing a lot of folks overlook is the fact that much of the sound of the amp is affected by the room it's in while tracking. You can turn this to your advantage by using multiple mic'ing techniques to capture the room for an even bigger sound.

A really good example of this can be found on my song "The Hudson Strut." On that song, I stuck a Shure KSM27 mic right up to the speaker cone, and I placed another about six feet back and off to the side to capture more of what was going on in the room. I recorded it in my home bonus room studio. The room is the size of a two-car garage and not totally dead or baffled. It has some life to it, and you can hear the room on the track. Without the second mic, the guitar would have sounded lifeless and plain. I have also used bathrooms and hallways to mic guitars, and I've even gone to the extreme opposite end and enclosed the speaker cabinets with couch cushions to make it sound dead. The possibilities are endless, even without leaving your house. Often, you can use small 5- or 10-watt amps that, when recorded in a lively room like a bathroom or kitchen, can sound gigantic, particularly when you mic from a distance where you can hear the room.

Another interesting technique I used was on "Bldg. 55," where I tracked the entire song using only a PRS Swamp Ash Special plugged into different amps with different mic'ing techniques—and I changed the pickup selection along the way. I was fascinated with the way the guitar responded so differently through the various rigs. On some of the tracks, I played it through a Kustom Coupe half-stack mic'd close with the Shure KSM27 then put another KSM27 in the corner of the room. There are no rules; it's all about experimentation. I would then plug the same guitar into my old Music Man HD-130 and mic it with only one mic direct on the cone, moving the mic till I found the "sweet spot." It made the guitar sound completely different. If you like what you're hearing, record it. If you don't like it, move the mic and try again.

Another way to go these days is by recording direct and creating the room sound you want digitally. On "Seisenheimer Strasse 9," I used my big fat Gibson 165 Herb Ellis Signature Series guitar. I have it strung with flatwounds and ran it through a Pod Pro II. With it I was able to simulate not only the type and angle of the mic but what amp I was running through. Since this is a jazzier song, I chose a small 1x12 combo amp. I was still able to create how much of the room was being heard on the track. The replication on some of these units is remarkable. I could truly hear the rooms vary as I scrolled through the settings.

You can do so much experimentation with your mics that the possibilities are endless. You can try simultaneously mic'ing your cabinet with three or four different mics, maybe a Shure SM57, a Senheiser MD 421 and an AKG C 412, and solo each one on playback to determine which is getting the job done for you. Using them at the same time will save you from having to re-track a part numerous times in order to try out various mics. You can also mic straight-on or at an angle, and of course mic'ing at a distance to capture the room is an essential part of a well-recorded guitar.

Well, there's a closer look behind the scenes of *Cottage City Firehouse*. With some savvy experimentation you can pull off some astonishing results and really impress yourself and amaze your listening audience with a top-quality home recording.

Keep jammin'!

With a few proper microphones and a couple of tricks of the trade you can get your guitars to sound as big as Texas.

Rich Eckhardt

Rich is one of the most sought-after guitarists in Nashville. His ability to cover multiple styles has put him on stage with singers ranging from Steven Tyler of Aerosmith to Shania Twain. Rich is currently playing lead guitar with Toby Keith. You can pick up a copy of his new CD, *Cottage City Firehouse* online at: richeckhardt.com

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STEVE COOK

The State of Bass, 2010

There's a great line in the classic '80s movie *Revenge of the Nerds* when Poindexter, in a cannabis-assisted moment of clarity, asks the question, "Would you rather live in the ascendency of a civilization or during its decline?" If you try and get too deep during a party… well, it's just a downer. But the question he asks is a great one for sober discussion—and one I present to you. I ask because this month is my annual report on the State of Bass: the trends, the upswings, downswings, and the overall current situation of the instrument with the most power on stage but the least recognition. (Yes, I said it…)

Bass, electric or acoustic, really is a powerful instrument in its own right. Let's forget about gear for a second and think about the effect it has on a song. Put a dotted quarter note in the straight-eight pattern, and you just changed the song. You think a guitar player has that power? Even if they play the sweetest of flat 9 chords, we can come along and play a note underneath that can change the whole landscape. It's the quiet storm that we possess in our fingers. Use your powers for good, not evil!

For years, the bass player was the not-so-talented guitar player in the band who was made to play bass because the band needed one. It was sort of like being the last one picked for flag football. Likewise, there were a limited number of gear options for bass players (not like today—as you thumb the pages of this magazine, you'll see an overwhelming amount of gear that's available). In the early days, upright players couldn't be heard, and the electric bass guitar came along to help players finally get in the mix—though our cause was not assisted by the fact that ads said things like, "Easy for guitar players to play" and "Less tiring than playing old-style bass." All of a sudden, there was a fleet of players out there who didn't really understand what bass was about, and the stereotype of the fat kid on bass was born.

Several players did hop on board the electric bandwagon early and started blazing a trail for the rest of us. After a while, more products came out, from different designs to better amp options, and things really started opening up. In a moment of historic wonderment, someone used a guitar effect pedal on a bass somewhere and changed the game yet again. All of a sudden, distorted bass was everywhere. Then the '70s hit and bass players harnessed the envelope filter, and then the chorus pedal. In the '80s, we started seeing more and more products for bass, with players moving from beside the kit to out in front of the band—and in some cases, without a band at all. We came a long way, baby.

Which brings us to the State of Bass today. I am pretty excited about what's going on in our little world. Every NAMM show, something new and fantastic comes out for us. The instrument selection now is better than ever, with a design and configuration for every single player out there. That's pretty encouraging, because to me the sign of a great guitar is one that you don't want to put down. We have everything from 3- to 16-string basses, and while you may not see a 16-stringer on the Grand Ole Opry, it still has a place. With so many great luthiers out there, you can pretty much have your dream bass made a reality.

With better basses also came better amps. We've moved from tube to solid-state to a hybrid to tube again. The solid-state amps have shrunk to less than four pounds, and the cabs are getting better (and lighter, too!). We can now choose the sound we want—modern, vintage, harsh, smooth—in a size suitable for the arena or the bedroom, and even in the colors we want! Built into the amps of today are super-high-quality effects, studio-quality DIs, and EQs to capture or cut every frequency nuance you can think of. Beats having one tone knob, even though some would argue that's all you need. It's nice to have options.

Those purists who believe that we're flooded with too many options and too much gear must've been Henry Ford fans… "You can have any color Model T, as long as it's black."

I'm a child of the '80s. Growing up, I rarely heard a bass that didn't have chorus on it. After I bought my first bass and amp, the next thing I saved up for was a chorus pedal. We go through phases in our playing, but as we get older and wiser we find a respect for the past, and must keep an eye on the future. I love the fact that today so much gear and so many sounds are available, and that pop radio isn't totally dictating the tone of the day. There will always be influence from the music we grew up with and enjoyed, but with today's technology we're exposed to much more music than even ten years ago. It drives us to learn and listen, and in turn create new music.

I love the fact that today so much gear and so many sounds are available, and that pop radio isn't totally dictating the tone of the day.

To answer Poindexter's question about living during a civilization's ascension or decline, it doesn't matter, as long as you know which one you're in. I'm confident that we are on the rise on many fronts, and the climb continues. Our progress in gear, approach and musicianship has grown by leaps and bounds in the past few decades, and I can't wait to see what comes next. The world will always love vintage gear and the way things "used to be"—and we should. Without progress, however, we can't evolve. And without evolution the bass player is relegated to the back of the stage (again). Let's keep moving forward, and keep finding that tone!

Steve Coook

Steve has performed and recorded with a diverse range of artists, from Edwin McCain to Randy Brecker to Course of Nature. Steve is also an alumnus of Woodstock '99, performing with his band King Konga. His current projects include extensive touring and video production with Bucky Covington (Lyric Street) and writing a popular weekly tour journal on his website: shinybass.com.

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ROBERT WILLIAMS

Express Yourself

Expression pedals from M-Audio, Boss and Moog.

In this new age of digitally controlled processors, guitarist have the ability to craft sounds that morph and can be manipulated in real time. Unfortunately, most guitarists tend to be very traditional and "static" in their use of effects, often ignoring this ability. My aim here is to help guide you toward the creation of an expanded sonic landscape that will focus on floor-based or rackmounted multi-effects units. There are also stompboxes that allow for control voltage (CV) or expression control (exp), like the Moog Moogerfooger series, the Electro-Harmonix HOG, the Boss DD-7 delay, and the modeler series from Line 6.

Same as It Ever Was

Let's start by looking at a typical effects line-up in a typical tune: a clean sound for intro and verse with compressor, chorus, delay, and reverb; then a crunch sound for the bridge with light effects, giving way to bone-dry heavy distortion for the chorus; then a saturated sound for the solo with delay and maybe a wah. You can insert any style of music or reverse the order so the verse is heavy and chorus is clean. Like many players, you can be even more "static," leaving the same effects on from the beginning to the end of a song. In a word, it's *dull*. No matter where you go in the world, it's likely that the effects will be connected in the same order and will probably even have similar settings. Often, there isn't a real connection between the effects and the dynamics of the tune; they're just on or off. But it doesn't have to be that way!

Open up to a New World

If your effects device has an exp/CV pedal built in or a jack to accept such a control pedal, there's a whole big world available to you, gentle reader. A control pedal looks just like a wah or volume pedal, but it can be assigned to control parameters such as wet/dry balance, rate, depth, etc. Some control pedals are made of plastic and are dedicated to expression. Others are heavy-duty metal with an expression jack and can double as audio devices (also doing wah or volume, for example), or they're multi-purpose kitchen-sink wonders, like my current favorite, the Moog MP201. Many players are good with one control pedal; some assign one for volume, one for wah, one for the effects parameters. With the Moog I use, I managed to get rid of four separate pedals, since I can select functions or assignments from the front panel.

To access parameter control in a multi-effect, you usually have to dig into the effects menu, a MIDI control menu, or sometimes a global menu. There you assign parameters and ranges to the effects you want to control, and also tell the unit which of the pedals it should react to in order to allow the changes to be heard.

So, we have the tools, what now? Let's take our example's effects chain and develop it a bit. The control options range from as simple as straight volume control to controlling as many parameters as the effects unit(s) will allow to be accessed simultaneously. For example, you could set things up so the heel-down position on your control pedal is a completely unaltered tone, then program the chorus, delay, and reverb balance to become more prominent as the toe goes down. You could also use a control pedal to go from a clean, swirly, delayed sound with the heel down to a dry, heavily distorted sound at the toe-down position. We could go from multiple effects in control to none. Effects balance is just the beginning: vibrato depth, flanger feedback, and delay time are among a few of the possibilities. You could also add psychoacoustic animation via panning or tremolo to provide subtleties that aren't as in your face as the time domain or modulation effects. The combinations are endless—it really only depends on what your gear supports or provides—and can be as subtle or radical as your imagination will allow.

Note that the effects don't have to change settings in response to the control pedal in unison. Some (like compression) may not be altered at all when you move the pedal. Regardless of the combination, anywhere in the pedal travel is a slightly more or less effected combination, which is much more sonically interesting and not at all static. For a more expansive rig, consider using a MIDI floor controller and multiple effects units. Even in this case, the principle is exactly the same: you're assigning a control pedal to allow parameters to be changed in real time, as you're playing. With more gear, it just requires a few more buttons pushes and menu assignments. And if you don't want to use a control pedal, some devices allow your playing dynamics to alter effects parameters. Devices like the Korg KAOSS pad even give you control via your fingertips.

Check out David Torn, The Edge, Robert Fripp, Vernon Reid, Oz Noy, Matt Bellamy, and Henry Kaiser for examples of this non-static tonal style. Then crack those manuals and check the user forums to download presets for your gear and get tweaking! PG

ROBERT WILLIAMS

Sweetwater Sales Engineer Robert Williams has terminal G.A.S. He also has years of experience as a guitarist, engineer, video editor, and broadcast automation integrator at sites across North America and the UK. Contact him at 1-800-222-4700 ext. 1371 or robert_williams@sweetwater.com.

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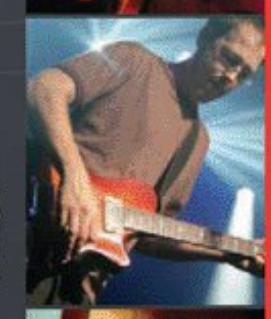

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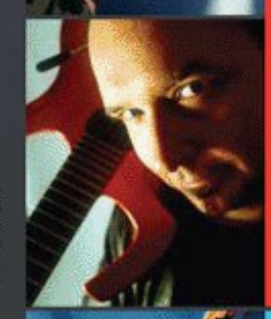

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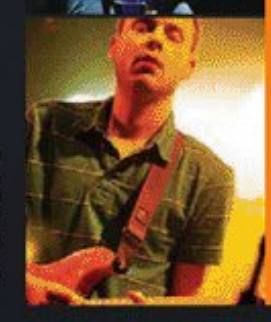

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JEFF BOBER

Load Boxes and Pulling Twin Power Tubes

Hi, Jeff.
First off, thanks for your informative article every month, and thanks in advance for whatever help you may be able to provide. I play in a band that plays mostly acoustic-based music. We're hitting the road next month and I want to be able to lay in some electric guitar timbres, but I don't want to bring an amp and cab just to hit a few chords on the electric guitar. However, I'm not really satisfied with simply substituting the amp for some sort of simulator (like a POD or SansAmp). I have an Epiphone Valve Jr. head, and I was wondering if there is some way that I can use this amp without a cab; that is, run it into a DI box and into a PA. I know there are some power attenuators that also act as a speaker load, but these are expensive and are functionally excessive for what I'm looking for. As an alternative to using the Epiphone amp, I've been looking at things like the Electro-Harmonix 2ube Preamp or the Rock Block by Surprise Sound Lab, but the latter especially is also very expensive. Do you know of any product that is small and inexpensive—a direct-box-sized thing that acts as a speaker load for an amp? And if not, why doesn't such a thing exist?
Henry Prol
Jersey City, NJ

Hi, Henry.
Thanks for your question and thanks for being a *Premier Guitar* reader. I understand your concern regarding the substitution of some sort of amp simulator for the real deal. I've been in situations like that and I agree—it's just not the same. Personally, I do like to move a little air, hence I'd opt for at least some sort of small speaker enclosure. But hopefully using an amp such as your Valve Junior with some sort of load will suffice. Since you will be using a full tube amplifier, including its output stage, you may wind up with a true enough sound to satisfy your tone needs, not to mention one that feels right—which is also very important.

Because the output power of your Valve Junior amp is in the 5-watt range, I can see why you'd consider most of the currently available load boxes to be overkill, and I'd have to agree with you. On the other hand, most do provide some sort of compensation in their line outputs making that signal much more useable for recording or front-of-house reproduction. Anyway, to alleviate the cost of purchasing a full-blown attenuator, I suggest the following.

In a small project box, mount an 8-ohm, 20–25 watt resistor (yes, I tend to overbuild everything) and two 1/4" jacks. Wire the jacks and resistor all in parallel: tip connections of both jacks to one end of the resistor, sleeve connections of both jacks to the other resistor connection. You now have a very basic 8-ohm load box to connect to the output of your amplifier. While this box does not take into account the inductive and capacitive load characteristics of a real speaker load like some pricier load boxes, you've saved yourself at least a couple hundred bucks. Connect the speaker output of your amplifier to one of the jacks on your load box. Connect the other jack on the box to the "from amplifier" input of a speaker-simulator direct box such as the H&K Red Box or The Junction by Palmer. (You didn't think you were going to pocket ALL the money you just saved on the load box, did you?) The output of these boxes will provide you with a balanced signal to send to your PA and monitor system. You could also try some less expensive DI boxes that do not contain speaker simulation circuitry, but since the load box is already pretty basic, I don't know that you will achieve satisfactory results with just a basic DI box. If you have access to a basic DI box however, go ahead and give it a try first. You never know, it may work just fine for your situation. I hope that helps lighten your load on the road.

> Yes, you can physically remove output tubes from the Twin, but you must remove two, not one.

Also, as a follow up, I received this from a reader regarding a column I wrote a couple of months ago [Feb., 2010]:

I loved your article on the Twin Reverb. One thing you didn't mention (and maybe there is a good safety reason for that) is removing one of the power tubes! I've known countless guitar players over the 40 years I've been playing that have used this technique. In fact, I've done it myself for a concert I played where the backline was supplied for the bands. If I remember right, remove the first 6L6 and the power is cut in half. I know this works, but the question is "Am I lucky the amp didn't explode, or is this another option for getting that tone at a lower volume?" Color me curious—and reckless—if I play another gig where the amp is provided and it happens to be the sterile Twin Reverb. Is it safe to pull power tubes?
Phillip

Hi, Phillip.
In reviewing my column, I noticed that while I did address the option of removing tubes from the circuit, I did it electrically with a switch and not the old-fashioned way of simply removing them from their sockets. Yes, you can physically remove output tubes from the Twin, but *you must remove two, not one*. Removing only one, no matter which, will cause an unbalanced load on the primary side of the output transformer—and this I highly recommend against.

Jeff Bober
Jeff Bober, Godfather of the low wattage amp revolution, co-founded and was the principal designer for Budda Amplification. He can be reached at pgampman@gmail.com.

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DIRK WACKER

Tone Capacitors for Stratocasters, Part 1

Hello, and welcome back to "Mod Garage." Recently, I've received a lot of emails about tone caps for Stratocasters. I've discussed capacitors in general a few times before, and those earlier columns are a good place to start if you want to find out more about tone caps for guitars and how to determine the best value for you. Based on those, we'll dig deeper into the subject, and concentrate on caps for Strats. I can give you advice about what to try based on my experience with different caps and Strats over the years, but there are no fixed rules. It's your guitar and your sound, and there's no law that says you can't try whatever you want. Be brave and go wild, and maybe you'll find something by accident that suits you exactly. One customer of mine uses only caps from a specific old German radio from the '50s. For him, it's the perfect tone. If you have some old, obsolete electronic products in your cellar or attic, they're a good source for some wild experiments. I received an email from a guy in Arkansas who opened up some old military stuff from the '50s and found tons of Sprague Bumblebee caps... some of them are now living their second life in his Les Paul and SG guitars, and providing superb tone.

In a nutshell, a capacitor is an electrical/electronic device that stores energy in the electric field between a pair of conductors (called *plates*). The process of storing energy in the capacitor is known as *charging*, and involves electric charges of equal magnitude but opposite polarity building up on each plate. Capacitors are often used in electrical and electronic circuits as energy-storage devices. They can also be used to differentiate between high-frequency and low-frequency signals. This property makes them useful in electronic filters, and that's exactly what we use them for in our guitars. Basically, our passive tone control can be used to dampen the high frequencies. When you close the tone pot, it rolls off the treble response, resulting in a more mellow tone. Adjusting this control affects the sound very noticeably, but it's still recognizably the same guitar. As a basic rule, you could say the bigger the cap, the darker the tone. Depending on the cap's value, or *capacitance*, the effect can go from slightly warmer (2200–6800pF) to a "woman tone" (0.01–0.047uF) up to completely dark and "clinically dead" (0.1uF and higher). Another thing to remember is that the tone cap is always part of the circuit and even influences the guitar's tone when the tone pot is left fully open—that's the reason the tone cap is such an important part of the sound.

Here are some caps you should try in your Strat:

Orange Drop
These legendary caps were formerly produced by Sprague. Today they're made by the American company SBE, but with the same old machines and the original tooling of the golden days. They are film types, available in different voltage ratings, sizes, shapes and values. The typical Orange Drop caps we know of are used in high-quality tube amps, especially the 630V types. These have the most "Fendery" tone when used in a Strat: slightly scooped mids and a tight, percussive bass response great for clean playing (and overdrive too). There are several different series available. The most common ones available from guitar parts suppliers are the 715P and the higher-graded 716P series. Both are polypropylene film types. The 225P and the PS series are polyester film types. These are the ones you should try in your Strat. They sound even more "Fendery" than the 715P and 716P series. As a film cap, the Orange Drop caps are non-polarized, so their orientation makes no difference... at least it should make no difference, but that's a subject for a later column.

Mallory 150
These axial-leaded polyester film caps, or "poly-film" caps, are easy to identify because of their bright yellow color, similar to the old Plessi caps you may know from the Music Man amps. The Mallory 150 caps are made by the Canadian company DuraCap. Because of the axial-leaded shape, they're very easy to use in guitars. They sound very punchy with a good edge—a perfect Strat tone cap for blues and rock. With overdrive, they sound very mellow and musical. This cap works perfectly with single-coil pickups, but will work with humbuckers as well. If you want a modern, round tone, this is a cap you should try.

ERO Roederstein MKT1813
Made by Vishay, these are also axial-leaded polyester film caps, and they're also yellow, but not as bright and shiny as the Mallory 150s. They have a very woody and transparent tone; in a Telecaster they can sometimes sound like an acoustic guitar. If your Strat has a very woody and resonant primary tone, this cap will bring it all to the surface when amplified.

NOS Styroflex caps
Often called "polystyrol" caps, you can find them easily on eBay today, even though they're no longer in production. Polystyrene capacitors are best used for filters, timing circuits, feedback circuits and anywhere high stability and low leakage is important, but they also are great tone caps for guitars, amps and stompboxes. Polystyrene (PS, often called "Styroflex" or "styrol" in Europe) has long been the material of choice for critical analog circuits. Polystyrene caps are a perfect substitute for silver mica caps, but much smaller and easier to find in the typical values we use for guitars. If you want maximum transparency and no tone coloration at all, this is the type of cap you should try.

Next month we'll talk about paper-in-oil caps, silver mica caps, tropical fish caps, paper waxed caps and the good ol' NOS "high voltage" ceramic caps from the '50s and '60s. Until then... keep on modding!

Dirk Wacker

Dirk Wacker lives in Germany and has been addicted to all kinds of guitars since age five. He is fascinated by anything to do with old Fender guitars and amps. In his spare time he plays country, rockabilly, surf and Nashville styles in two bands, works part-time as a studio musician for a local studio and writes for several guitar mags. He is also a confessing hardcore DIY guy for guitars, amps and stompboxes and runs an extensive webpage, singlecoil.com, about these things.

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WALLACE MARX JR.

Larry Taylor, Jerry Lee Lewis and Gear that Comes and Goes

We've all seen it. That guitar we saved so long for, that we swore we'd never sell, ends up paying the rent one month. The amp we lusted after as the ultimate font of tone all of a sudden becomes fair game for a trade. Or, we go on a hunt through the old milk crate for a stompbox we haven't seen in a while only to remember that we last had it when we jammed with that one guy who left early, and mysteriously.

Larry Taylor has seen plenty of gear. Known to some as "the Mole," he played in the seminal American blues band Canned Heat. If you've seen the original Woodstock documentary film, that's him throttling a P-Bass for all it's got, rocking out to the extreme at sundown on the first day. I could end this column right there, such is the magnitude of that statement. But Taylor's crazy ride through rock 'n' roll—and the mountains of gear that have passed through his hands—would then remain untold. His story goes much further, much deeper, and much wider than almost any other living rocker, and it's a great peek into how music and gear have evolved and changed and touched upon the lives of so many people worldwide. It offers an insight into how the people, the gear, and the gigs are all connected.

So for kicks, and for learning, here's the story of when Taylor, at the tender age of 19, went on tour with Jerry Lee Lewis. Don't worry, there's gear talk in here. It's mid-1961 and 19-year-old Larry Taylor is playing bass in a regular gig at the Sea Witch on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. The group is Wesley Reynolds and the West Coast House Rockers. (Reynolds, who has the distinction of having cut the classic single "Shut Down" for the Valor label, moved to Chicago a few years after the time of this little tale and was seen by a young guitarist named Michael Bloomfield, who would go on to say that it was Reynolds' playing that compelled him to go out and learn to play the blues.)

Back at the Sea Witch, during a set break, a couple of girls tell Taylor that Jerry Lee Lewis is looking for a bass player. Lewis was playing that week at Jimmy Madden's Sundown Club—which would later turn into the Red Velvet and then the Lingerie Club. Taylor gets himself an audition and is hired by The Killer on the spot. The next night he plays the first gig of what would become a year-and-a-half tenure.

After some gigs around Los Angeles, Taylor travels to Memphis in a four-door 1959 Cadillac with The Killer, drummer Russell P. Smith, and Lewis' manager. A set of drums, a tweed Fender Bassman, and Larry's sunburst 1957 Fender Precision bass with anodized pickguard make the trip in the trunk. After a couple of gigs in Memphis, the crew heads down to Lafayette, LA, then to Lewis' hometown of Faraday, where Taylor is taken in by the Lewis family as one of their own. After a few days, the group leaves the small town to go on an extended tour of the Southern US, crisscrossing Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Texas, and Louisiana in their Cadillac, playing every good hall, every bad hall, and most every VFW in between.

Here's how Taylor describes the gear situation at a Jerry Lee Lewis club gig in 1961 (think about it the next time you do soundcheck at your local non-smoking club where they have an 800-watt PA, floor monitors, and a mix for each guy in the band): "Most of the time, the place would have a Bogen PA, like the ones you see come up sometimes… 25, maybe 30 watts—tubes. Jerry Lee would mic his piano with a De Armond violin pickup. They were about the size of your thumb, maybe a little wider. He'd wrap it in a handkerchief and then shove that thing into one of the gaps in the back of the club's upright piano, right up against the soundboard. Then he'd plug into the Bassman. I'd plug into the Bassman, too. There was only one set of controls on that amp, which he'd be in charge of. I'd adjust my tone on the bass. And that'd be it: a Bogen PA and a Fender Bassman."

As the tour winds down toward the end of 1962, Taylor finds himself alone with the tweed Fender Bassman in a Memphis hotel room. Still in possession of his Fender bass, he had also acquired an early sunburst Strat, one of the first in Memphis—owned at some point by Sun Rockabilly artist Roland Janes. Without Jerry Lee, without a gig, and without money, Taylor decides the best thing to do is to make his way back to L.A. So he packs up the gear and sends it ahead collect, something you could do in those days. Then he hitchhikes his way back.

As the tour winds down toward the end of 1962, Larry finds himself alone with the tweed Fender Bassman in a Memphis hotel room.

Back at the Sea Witch a few months later, Taylor looks down from the bandstand to see two of Mr. Lewis' close associates giving him the high sign (or something similar). At break, they inform him that The Killer wants his gear back. Fessing up, Taylor tells them the Strat is gone, but they can have the Bassman. Fair enough, they say. Later that evening, Taylor drops off the Bassman at Lewis' hotel room, no questions asked.

Gear cometh, and gear goeth.

Wallace Marx Jr.

Wallace Marx Jr. is the author of *Gibson Amplifiers, 1933–2008: 75 Years of the Gold Tone*

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ZACHARY R. FJESTAD

Regal Esquire

Hey, Zach.
I recently purchased this Regal Esquire guitar from Michael Ricciarelli of North Branch Instruments, LLC of Montpelier, VT. Ricciarelli is a repair technician, and he recently completed an apprenticeship with Pete Langdell of Rigel mandolins, who owned the guitar before him. Langdell added some features, including a double truss rod and internal piezo pickup with an endpin jack. There is no label inside and no serial number. This guitar really sings on the high end with a strong bass side as well, and I have only seen one other Regal Esquire for sale. To me, this guitar is one of a kind, but can you tell me anything more about this guitar and its possible worth? Thanks!

John A. Ruis

Hey, John.
It sounds like you and the previous owners have already done quite a bit of research on this guitar yourself, but let's see what else we can find. I'm sure that many readers have heard of Regal, but the company's history is very interesting so we'll start there.

Regal was originally used as a brand name by Emil Wulschner when he and his stepson opened a factory in Indianapolis, IN. Wulschner passed away in 1900, but the factory continued on through 1902 or 1903 under the control of a larger corporation. By 1908, Regal had moved to Chicago, where they began building instruments and labeling them as a house brand them for a variety of distributors, wholesalers and retailers. The first Regal-branded guitars appeared in the late 1920s.

In 1932, Regal received a license from the National-Dobro Corporation to build guitars with a Dobro resonator, and in 1937 Regal acquired the rights to exclusively make all Dobros. Regal continued to produce a variety of mostly entry-level and intermediate instruments through the 1940s and early 1950s until ceasing operations in early 1954. Fellow house brand builder Harmony purchased most of Regal's assets at auction, but Harmony only produced a limited number of Regal-branded instruments—most notably a line of cheap, entry-level acoustics distributed by Fender. In 1987, Saga Musical Instruments reintroduced the Regal trademark on a line of resonator guitars that are still produced today.

Several features of this guitar are unusual, and you're probably right about it being one of a kind, but that can be expected due to the nature of most house-brand instruments, as well as the aftermarket modifications. In Regal's 1951 catalog, the the company presented the "New 1951 Regal Esquire," which to me means either the guitar was updated for 1951 or it was a new model in 1951 (the next earliest catalog I could find was from 1940). Regardless, the Esquire shown in the catalog is similar in style to yours, but it has a combination triangle/diamond fingerboard inlay, Regal-only headstock inlay and a tortoiseshell pickguard with more points. I looked everywhere for a similar guitar with an Esquire-only headstock like yours, but found absolutely nothing. I did find a few examples of the 1951 Esquire shown in the catalog, but they were fairly obscure as well. My guess is that the Esquire you have was produced before 1951 as the old design, or it was produced sometime between 1951 and 1954 as a newer style than the 1951 model. I also find it odd that it only has "Esquire" on the headstock and there is no other "Regal" identification on the guitar whatsoever. However, I find no evidence of another Esquire guitar trademark, aside from the model name used by Fender.

As I stated before, most Regal instruments produced between the 1920s and 1950s were built for the entry-level guitar player and were extremely cheap. Of course, there are a few exceptions, including the Dobro instruments and the nicely equipped Esquire archtop like you have. Today, Regal Esquires are valued between $900 and $1,200 in excellent condition, which your guitar appears to be in. Mint models could approach $1,500. As you mentioned, the guitar sounds great, so as long as you paid a fair price for it you certainly have a treasure in your collection.

For more information on "house brand" manufacturers, including Kay and Harmony, please visit our website: guitars.bluebookinc.com.

Zachary R. Fjestad
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JOHN BROWN

'62 Fender Strat Neck Chiropractic Adjustment

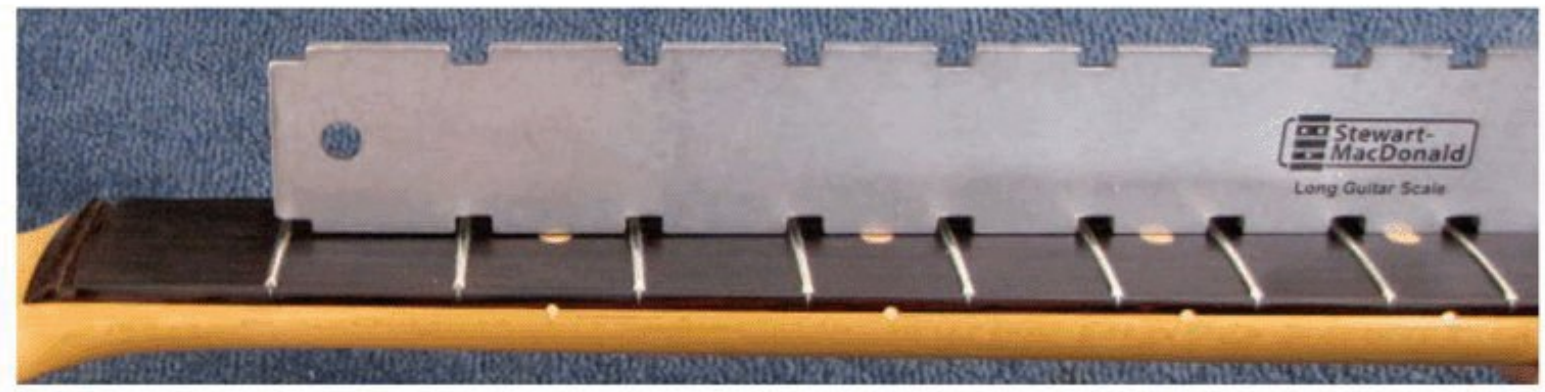
The US Postal Service arrived at our door with a box slightly bigger than a guitar neck stamped "Priority." It was a cold day here in Minnesota, so I let everything acclimate overnight to avoid damage, before opening the box to see what treasures might be lying within. The next morning, I opened up the box and saw one of the cleanest 1962 Fender Strat necks I've ever seen—so clean I might have questioned its origin, but it was in fact the real deal.

Inspection

At first glance, the reason this neck was sent to us was unclear. After thoroughly inspecting it and adjusting the truss rod nut to a neutral, loose position, the neck had a back bow of .024" from level. My choice of tools for measuring the back bow was a set of feeler gauges my brother Bob bought for me in the late '80s and a 25.5"-scale notched straightedge. Once the straightedge was resting firmly against the fingerboard, I measured the gap between the playing surface of the fingerboard and the leveled surface of the straightedge by using my feeler gauges at the first position.

Neck Straightening

Correcting this neck for .008" to .010" of relief under string pressure, while still having a half to a full turn of truss rod nut adjustment, was not going to be achieved in one session. Much like going in for some chiropractic adjustments for neck or back pain, one session is rarely enough to get the adjustment to take hold. Guitar neck problems like this are usually caused by alternating extremes of dampness and dryness, or the expansion and contraction of the neck and fingerboard woods. There are also a variety of different warps going on from neck to neck. The neck we restored here had a gradual yet overall extreme back bow. I used a neck heater and a variety of shims and clamps to manipulate everything back into place. There are a number of ways to heat a neck for correcting its posture, using such products as a Halogen lamp, a heating blanket or an iron bar neck heater. For this project I used a discontinued product by Stew Mac that I purchased from a repairman twenty some years ago. I know it as the S.M. Neck Heater.



I first attached the neck with four screws to a raw, leftover body blank that I had around for just these kinds of jobs. Then I placed it into my string tension simulator/Erlewine neck jig and adjusted it to create excess forward relief in the neck. I shaped two shims out of mahogany with a 7.25" bottom radius to sit on each end between the fingerboard and the neck heater, elevating the iron bar heater about 3/8" from the fingerboard surface. Using these shims helped protect against any damage to the fingerboard or clay dots during this long, drawn-out process.

I then used a camless clamp on each end to secure everything in place, with a surface thermometer sitting top and center on the neck heater. The heater is designed to regulate at 250 degrees, but I always like to monitor it to ensure the temperature is stable and not going into a danger zone. Considering the value of this neck, it's an important safety precaution.

By the end of the day of the first session, the bottom of the neck felt comfortably warm. I shut off the neck heater overnight, allowing for a cooling-down period so the soft glue joint between the fingerboard and neck could harden and reset. I used the neck relief gauge between sessions to measure each result. It took a total of four sessions to get the result I was looking for.

Keep in mind, it's always a good idea to go by the 15–20-minute rule when first applying heat to see the results achieved before a marathon session—and perhaps going too far and having to reverse the neck bow you just put in.

The following tools from Stew Mac were used for this project. Though there may be other tools and repair procedures to achieve similar results, this is what worked for me when restoring this particular neck:

#3814 Notched Straightedge
#1811 Feeler Gauges
#4603 Surface Thermometer
#5252 Erlewine Neck Jig
#3708 Small Camless Clamps
#3709 Large Camless Clamps
#2004 Neck Relief Gauge
S.M. Neck Heater (discontinued)

Thanks to you, *PG* readers, "Restoring an Original" is off to another fantastic year! See you next month.

John Brown

John Brown, of Brown's Guitar Factory, is the inventor of the Fretted/Less bass. He owns and operates a full guitar manufacturing and repair/restoration facility, which is staffed by a team of talented luthiers. He is also the designer of guitar making/repair tools and accessories that are used today by instrument builders throughout the world.
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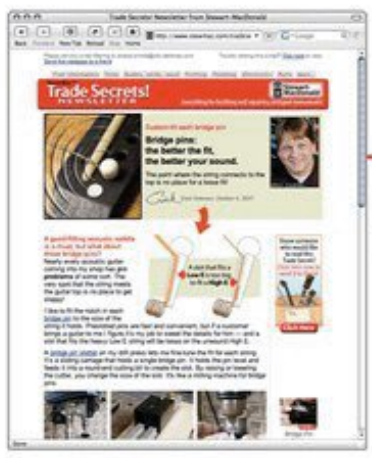

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KEVIN BORDEN

In Search of Uncle Bookie, Part 2

Last month we were discussing the trials and tribulations behind the deal to buy this wonderful bass. This month let's discuss the restoration and resurrection.

The Bass

When I purchased it, it was an utter disaster. It had suffered from years of neglect and experimentation by ham-fisted wannabe luthiers. At first glance, I could determine a clay dot neck and not much more. Before it was for sale, I made the assessment that it was a 1960 neck and body with all-1970s parts. That proved to be correct. The body had been stripped, but whoever did it hadn't altered any cavities or contours—it was as cut by the factory. The original finish is in *all* the cavities and the 9/60 pencil date is clear and vibrant. A very long time ago, though, the worst refin I've ever seen was performed on this bass. Nothing was removed, not the covers, strings, pickguard or anything. Someone just painted around them. The finish looks like it was applied by a rogue member of the Homer Formby Conservatory after a weekend bender. The barn-door-red stain is like nothing I've ever seen before (or hope to see again). The four mute holes are undisturbed, and the body still has the exterior ground wire routing.

The neck had been stripped of its finish a million years ago, but it was sent for a refinish in something that makes '70s Fender "thick skin" look like worn nitrocellulose. This concoction was professionally applied. The 8/60 neck date was preserved, but the logo is long gone. This finish has roughly the same sleek feel as a snow globe after kids eating peppermint sticks have played with it. The neck was attached to the body via its original neck plate. The four attachment screws, *oy vey*! They were slot head decking screws, but they were the right size, and they appear to be marine grade. The nut is missing under the E and A strings—with matchbook covers as a substitute. The frets have not been serviced since Al Kaline was a Tiger, and not a battery in your stompbox. A major grind and polish are in store.

The parts also were as I expected. Every stitch of hardware and electronics came from a 1974 Jazz Bass. I plugged the bass into an amp and got lots of really bad noise. I sprayed out the pots and they started oozing what looked to be syrup. This was the result of damp storage and grease—someone had lubed the pots with petroleum jelly. These pots are now trash. I hooked the pickups up to my multimeter and found that the tail pickup read open coil and the neck pickup had all the windings torn.

The Dilemma

Functionally, the bass was a disaster. The electronics needed to be made useable, the neck needed a new nut, and the frets needed to be cleaned up. I wanted the bass to be playable. The question was whether I should restore it or leave it alone.

Every purist I spoke to said, "Make it playable and leave it as is." I wanted to do some homework. The former owner of the bass was famous, however the bass was not. It was an electric bass in the arsenal of a doghouse player and seemed to serve as a guest bass or for very occasional use. Don't get me wrong, this bass was loved. I have documentation that says Stanley Clarke was on this bass. After talking this through with others, pleading with my conscience and making an educated judgment, I decided to fully restore the bass—I may be going against common sense, but Jerry Barnes told me Uncle Bookie probably would have restored it too.

So who would do the work? Luckily, I had a mostly complete set of hardware from a 1961 stacker Jazz Bass. The '61 pickups I have are blown, so I'll have them rewound. The finish work was a difficult choice, since I work with many great refinishers. I went with Krishna Jain of Guitar Garage in Massachusetts. Krishna knows basses really well, his finishes are superb and his turnaround time is amazing. I was debating between Fiesta Red and Olympic White, but after a long talk with Krishna and Matt Brewster of 30th Street Guitars and Rust Guitars, I decided to go with Olympic White. Matt is my voodoo-guru of all things to be repaired. He will do the mechanical restoration and a Rust Guitar-style mild relic'ing. This bass will return to its original glory as a 1960 stack-knob Jazz Bass. When I paid Buddy Williams for the bass, I promised him I would provide this bass with a good home, standing right next to my Gold Guard P-basses and my slab board J-basses.

The Low Down

It's been a glorious adventure, definitely a pinnacle moment of my career. I'm flattered that I was asked to be the purchaser of this bass, and humbled too. The opportunity was afforded in part because of the credibility I've gained by having this column—so I guess I owe all my readers a big "thank you" too (but no, you cannot borrow the bass). Until next time, drop the gig bag and bring the cannoli. PG

Kevin Borden

Kevin Borden has been a bass player since 1975 and is currently the principle and co-owner, with "Dr." Ben Sopranzetti, of Kebo's Bass Works: kebosbassworks.com. He can be reached at: Kebobass@yahoo.com. Feel free to call him KeBo.

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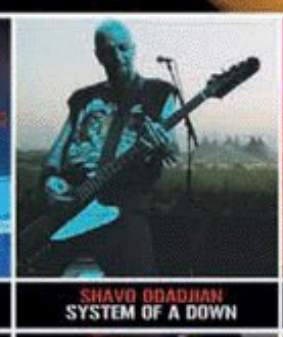

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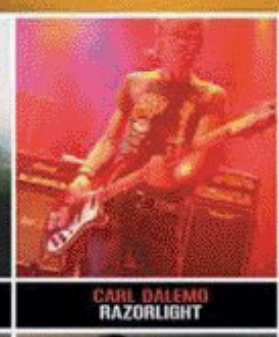

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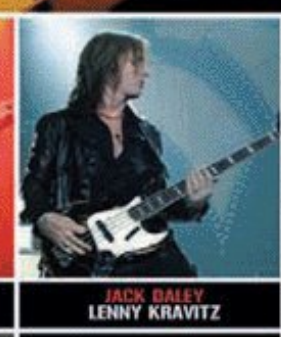

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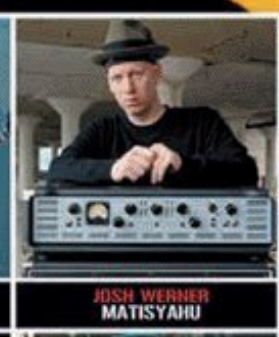

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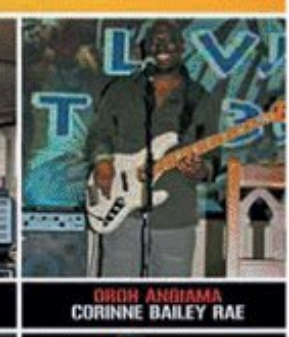

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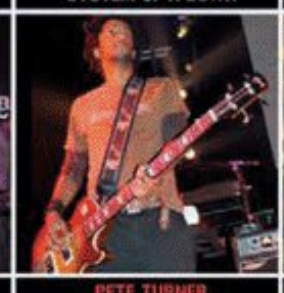

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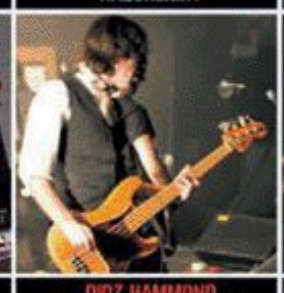

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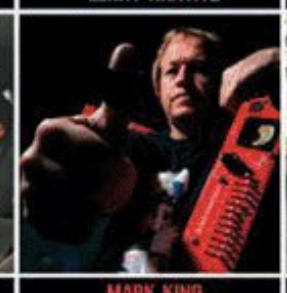

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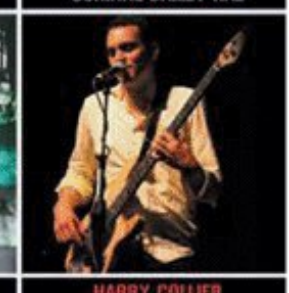

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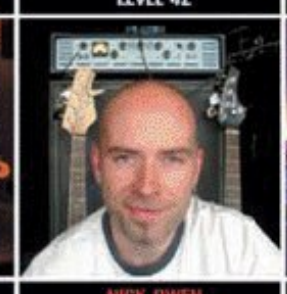

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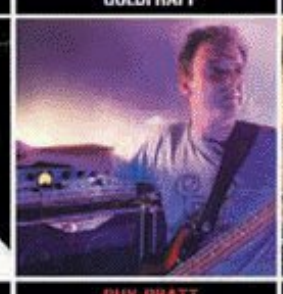

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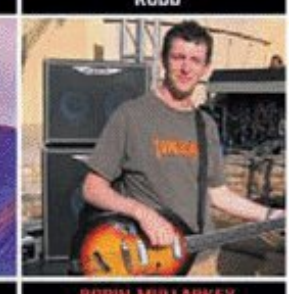

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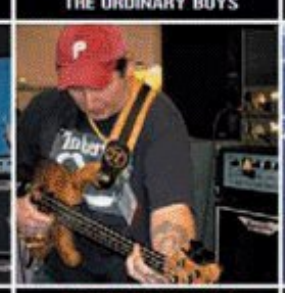

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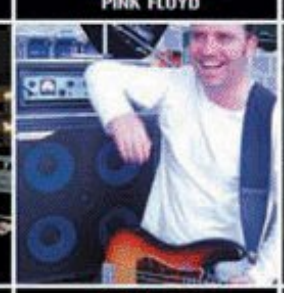

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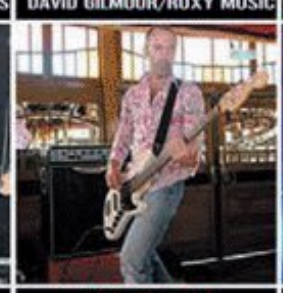

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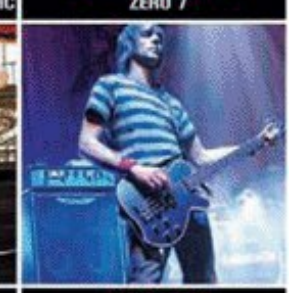

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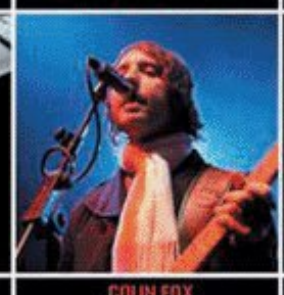

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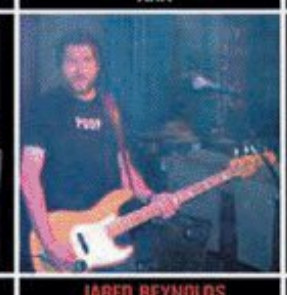

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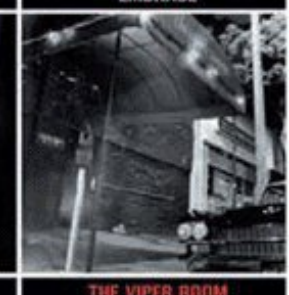

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1949 Gibson ES-5

Serial Number A-3943

When Ted McCarty started at Gibson in 1948, one of his first concerns was to develop and enlarge Gibson's line of electric guitars. Among these new electrics was the ES-5, introduced in 1949. The ES-5 was intended to be, according to Gibson literature at the time, "the supreme electronic version of the famed Gibson L-5."

Apart from the name, body dimensions, and fingerboard inlay, the ES-5 was very different from the L-5. A 1949 ES-5's features included: a 17"-wide body with laminated maple top, back and sides, pearl crown inlay on the headstock, rosewood fingerboard and unbound f-holes (until 1950). The most exciting part of the guitar was of course its three pickups. These P-90s were controlled by three individual volume knobs and one master tone.

This guitar was originally owned by a guitar teacher in Texas named Leroy Millican—that's him in the framed photo, taken in 1949 just after he purchased the guitar. The original Lifton hardshell case was included along with a five-page instruction manual explaining how to operate the electronics. More detailed information on the ES-5 and other Gibson electric guitars can be found in *Gibson Electrics: The Classic Years* by A.R. Duchossoir. Serial numbers of vintage guitars made by Gibson and other top brands can be found in *Guitar Identification*, also by A.R. Duchossoir.

Dave's Guitar Shop

Daves Rogers' collection is tended to by Laun Braithwaite and Tim Mullally
Photos and words by Tim Mullally
Dave's collection is on display at:
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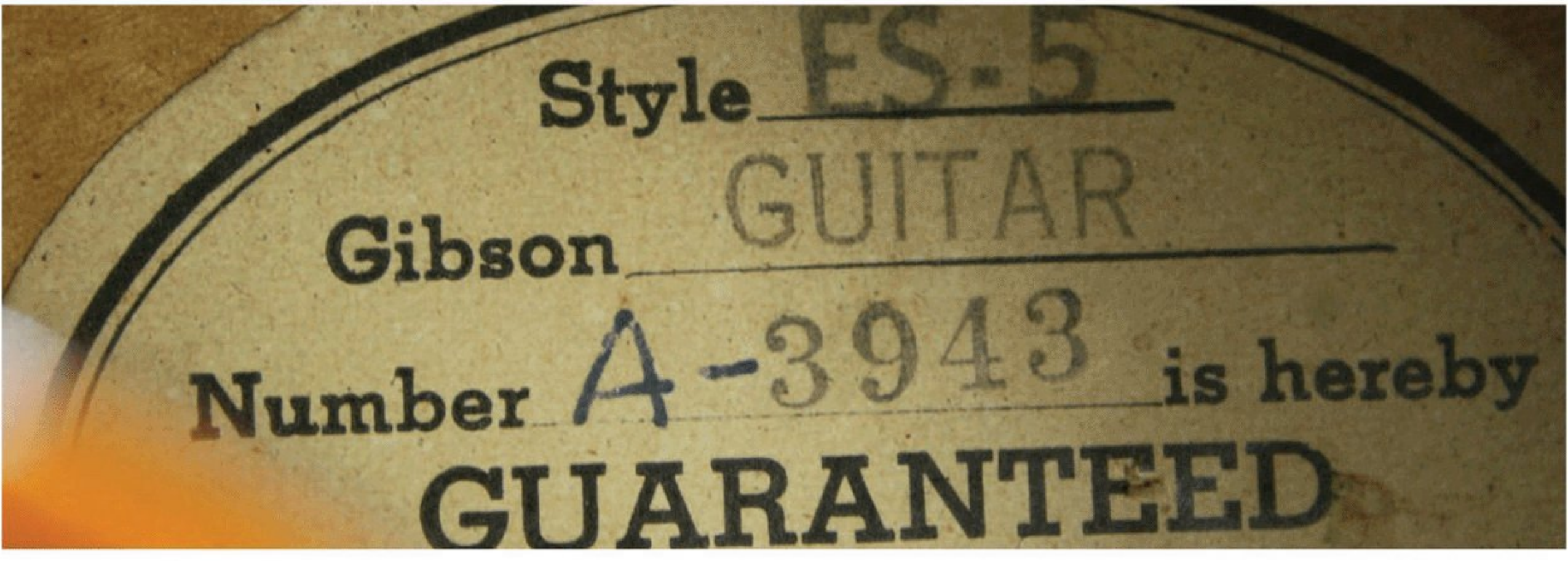
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ES-5

The ES-5 is equipped with three magnetic pickups that can be used individually or in combinations of any two, or all three. Fourteen different basic types of guitar tones plus an unlimited amount of variations from each basic tone are available by setting the volume control pointer dials at various positions, as explained on the "TONE CHART".

The basic principal which makes the ES-5 unique in its performance is the ability to reduce, increase and superimpose certain sections of the Harmonic Scale and blend these results to produce countless pleasing and unusual tone colorings.

A better understanding of this feature is brought out by the following explanation of the Harmonic Scale -- or "The Chord of Nature", as it is commonly called.



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JANE MILLER

The Back of the Room

The phone rings. You answer without looking at your caller ID. You know who it is within the first word spoken. Or, you call a friend. Someone else answers their phone. You're immediately confused, knowing that something sounds different. Sometimes, the recognition comes from the things that are said, their verbal licks, if you will. Most of the time, it's simply the sound of the familiar voice. There have been a handful of guitarists across the musical spectrum possessing a similar unmistakable identity in their playing: Jimi Hendrix, Carlos Santana, Pat Metheny, Wes Montgomery on the electric side; Joao Gilberto, Bruce Cockburn, Patty Larkin on the acoustic side; all come to mind as having a distinct voice with their instrument.

Finding your own natural sound with your instrument and gear is a personal challenge, and it relies on personal taste and style. It can be guided by the mechanics of your own playing, such as pick style versus finger style, hammer-ons and pull-offs versus cleanly picked notes, lots of big, full chords versus a more succinct comping preference, bass lines versus Freddie Green style quarter note rhythms, and so on. Wes Montgomery influenced generations of guitarists with his use of octaves in his lines, his inventive, almost giddy improvisational ideas, and of course, that big, warm tone. His signature sound was full and well rounded, which he achieved with his famous right-hand thumb, rather than a pick. He created a smooth sound, the opposite of edgy.

Before you dial in that low-end-only tone, however, listen again to Wes' recordings. Sure enough, you'll hear plenty of high-end in there to balance out all of that warmth—just a touch sometimes, but enough to keep it clean. Enough to create a leading edge, of sorts, preventing an avalanche of mud from burying all of those great lines and big, rich chords. It's a little like discovering that the snow is in fact a little blue, at least as seen by an artist. It is the hidden cinnamon in the spaghetti sauce that makes the overall effect just right.

I've shared a laugh with many colleagues over the phenomenon of buying a new guitar or a new amp and then tweaking it and tweaking it until we can finally get it to sound like the ones we've had for years. As jazz guitarist Howard Alden recently told me, "After a while, I think that if a player has a particular tone he hears in his head and is striving for, he'll instinctively and subconsciously get it out of whatever instrument he's playing, mainly with his hands and touch. It's not even so much a matter of adjusting knobs."

Ensemble playing requires extra thought when it comes to our tone, often apart from what we have chosen to be our solo voice. In a basic guitar-piano-bass-drums jazz quartet context, for example, we all need to occupy our own sonic home so that each musical idea can be heard as a discernable separate voice. Says Alden, "Contrasting sounds are more pleasing for duo or ensemble playing. If everybody sounded the same it would get very dull, and there'd be no balance or sense of conversation."

I've shared a laugh with many colleagues over the phenomenon of buying a new guitar or a new amp and then tweaking it and tweaking it until we can finally get it to sound like the ones we've had for years.

I took in a recent duo performance by Alden and Berklee College of Music Guitar Department Chair Larry Baione on the occasion of their new CD, *Azure*. I got to the College's David Friend Recital Hall during the first tune, so I had the chance to hear Larry and Howard playing through the entrance door from the back stage area. The sound was quiet and real, like two friends playing at home together. I felt like I had been let in on a secret conversation as I waited for the tune to end before finding my way to a seat. Once inside the room, I stood in the back of the full house and happily discovered as they continued through their set that the sound was just as I had heard it sneaking through the entryway. Howard played his custom Benedetto 7-string La Venezia archtop; Larry played his Collings AT-16 archtop. Not a pickup to be found on either guitar. Two mics stood before each of the f-hole instruments, gently and honestly reinforcing what was happening on stage. It was acoustic and lively, complete with dynamic rising and falling, funny—and serious—expressive playing and two very distinct voices. In the back of the room I heard Larry's Collings on the high-end of things, carrying every note and every pick-strummed chord all the way to the wall behind me with impeccable clarity and brightness, without venturing into harsh territory. I heard Howard's Benedetto providing extra warmth and fullness in the bass lines, the rounded-out melodies and fast, improvised lines without falling into the mud. Each remained true to his own sound, but each of their sounds had just a touch of the other's.

That is how their music reached me in the back of the room.

Jane Miller

Jane Miller is a guitarist, composer, and arranger with roots in both jazz and folk. In addition to leading her own jazz instrumental quartet, she is in a working chamber jazz trio with saxophonist Cercie Miller and bassist David Clark. The Jane Miller Group has released three CDs on Jane's label, Pink Bubble Records. Jane joined the Guitar Department faculty at Berklee College of Music in 1994. janemillergroup.com

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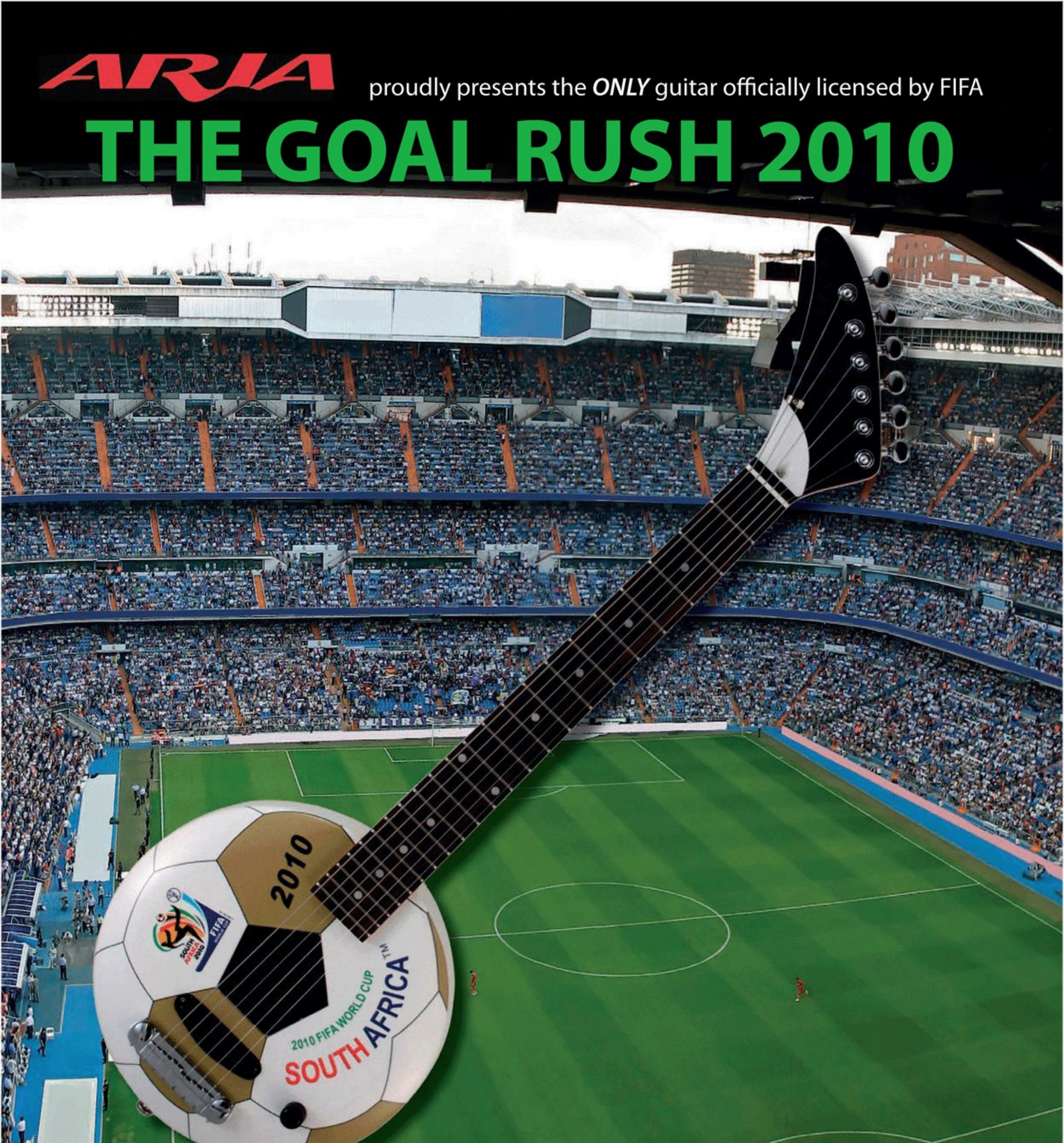

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GREG HOWE

Passing Tones

One of the approaches I've found to be very effective in spicing up solos is the use of passing tones. Passing tones are often regarded as scale tones residing between two chord tones. While this may be accurate by official definitions, it seems to me that the overly vague nature of such a definition does very little to provide useful information to someone genuinely interested in exploring this concept. So, for the sake of practicallity, passing tones might best be thought of as notes residing between two scale tones that are a whole tone apart. For example, any one of the following notes could be used as passing tones in a C major scale application: C♯, E♭, F♯, A♭ or B♭. Simply put, a passing tone is basically a non-harmonic tone maintaining the primary function of transitioning from one scale tone to another.

They are embellishments that can serve to add depth, tension, and an overall element of sophistication to almost any solo if used fittingly. Traditionally, it has been taught that passing tones should fall on weak beats or upbeats; however, I don't personally adhere to that rule unless the specific soloing section seems to lend itself to that approach. In most cases (but not all), it would generally be considered musically inappropriate to land on or linger on a passing tone. But again, this really is subjective territory, and the only rules that should ever really be obeyed are the ones that enable you to sound your best.

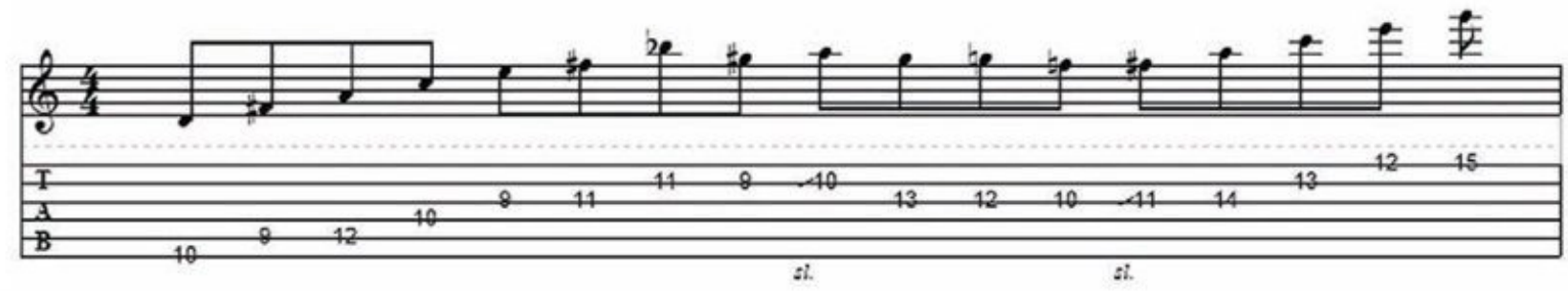
Historically, the reccuring use of specific passing tones within the context of traditional scales has often resulted in permanent modifications whereby the passing tone is subsequently included as part of the modified version. Such is the case with many contemporary scales, most notably the bebop scales and the classic blues scale. There is still some debate as to whether or not the modded versions qualify as legitimate scales at all. My personal opinion is, "Who cares?"

The following examples are designed to imply a D7 tonality. They're basically comprised of D Mixolydian notes (same notes as G major) along with passing tones. While these licks initially seem to imply a D7 tonality, they can also work equally well in the following G major related modes: **Dorian**, playing the licks over an Am chord, and **Lydian**, playing the licks over a C major chord.

Greg Howe

Greg Howe has enjoyed a successful recording career since bursting onto the scene in 1988, and his talents have been sought after by some of the biggest names in the music entertainment industry, such as Michael Jackson, Justin Timberlake, and Enrique Iglesias.

Ex. 1



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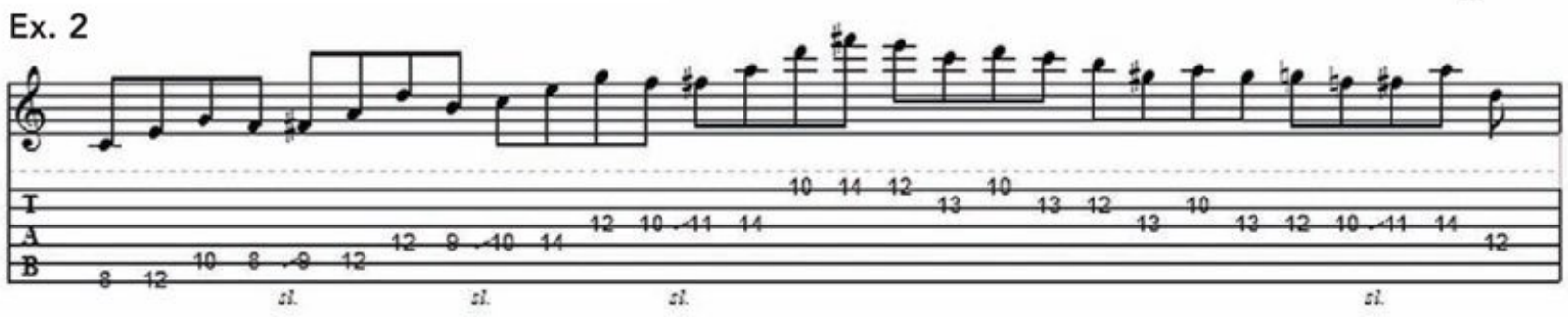

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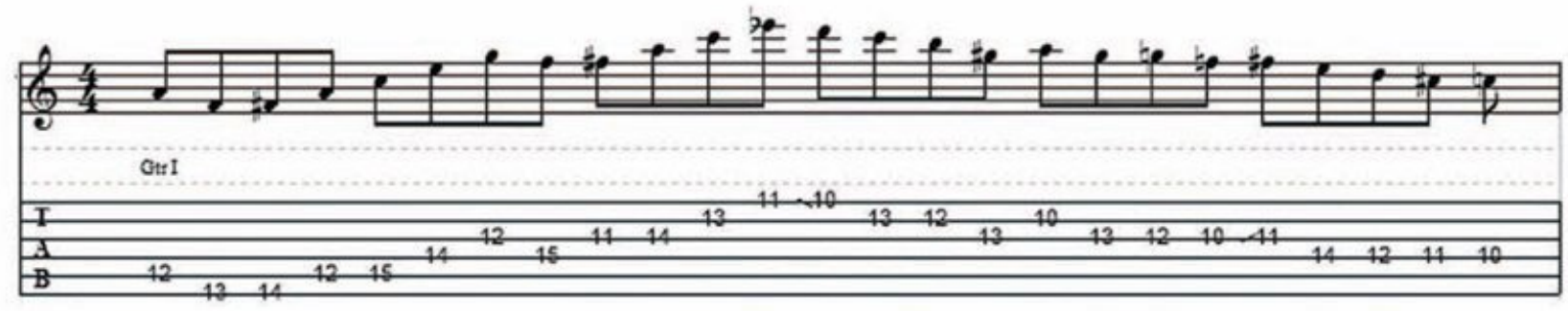

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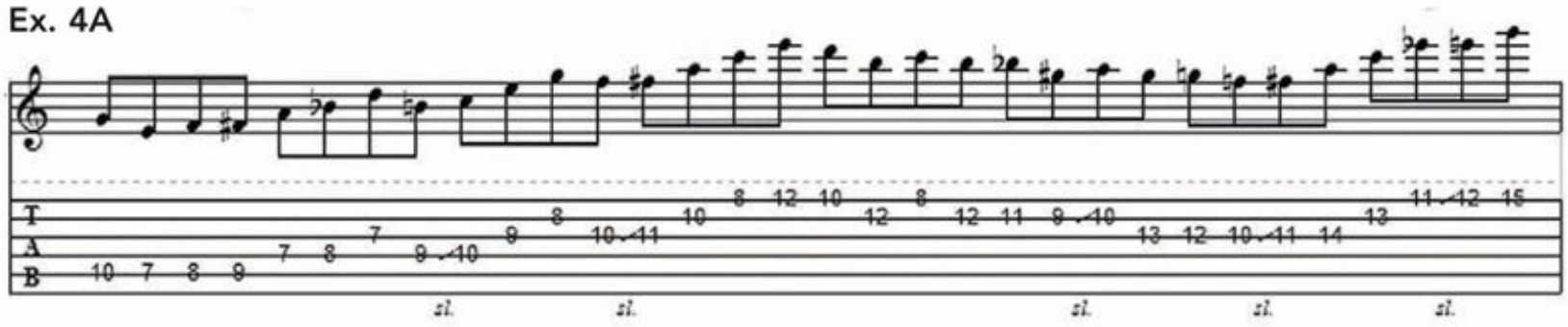

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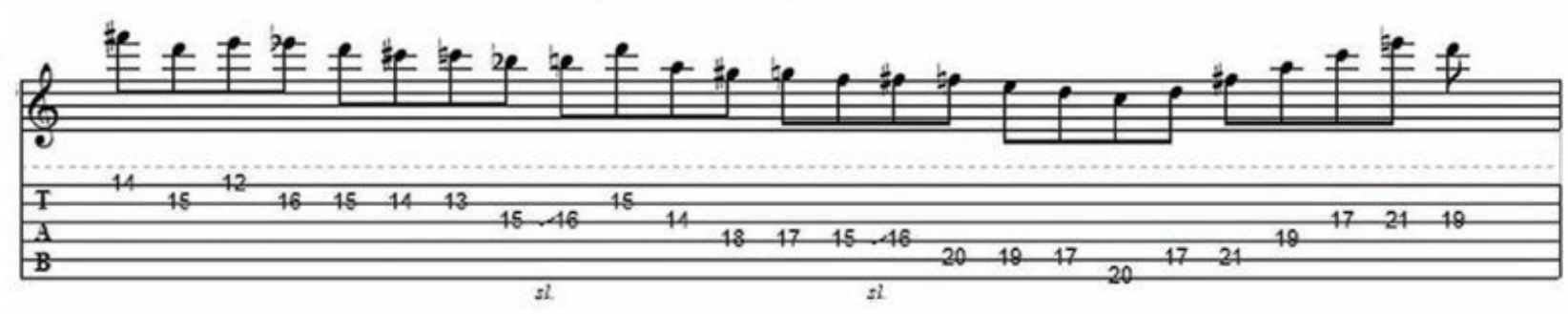

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Pot Luck

Dean F's custom 1981 Dean Z.

How's everybody doing? This month I've decided to examine one of my old habits, just so you won't have to be as limited as I once was. Specifically, I'm talking about the non-use of the guitar's volume and tone pots. Believe it or not, way back when, I never used my volume or tone controls (except to set them to full blast), because if I lowered them even a smidge, the resulting tone would be nothing but muddy! This was really annoying, because I had to control the final tonal shaping with the amplifier's tone controls instead. I basically had nowhere to go, unless I wandered over to the amp to make some tonal changes there, which I viewed as a hassle, of course. As a result, I had to be satisfied with my sound as it was. This old habit manifested itself in other ways, too, such as eventually having guitars made with no tone pots at all. My '81 custom Dean Z is a great example; it isn't stock wiring at all. I acquired this habit based upon the experiences I'd had earlier with my 1969 Gibson Super 400. During this time I was primarily a Gibson player, and my quality time with Fenders was still a few years ahead of me.

Eureka

In the early '80s, I built a Stratocaster-style guitar from parts, and I was just about blown out of my socks when I discovered that the instrument sounded great at every setting of the tone and volume controls. It was a surprise, but also a big relief. The bell of freedom was ringing loud and clear. As a result of this discovery, I did an about-face and became primarily a Fender player—though the Super 400 remained my main jazz guitar. It wasn't too far into the future that I found out I could get amazing jazz tones from a Telecaster or Stratocaster too. The main reason was that the Fender's lower-value potentiometers would allow a nice tonal variety to come out of the instrument, whereas the Gibson instrument wouldn't do quite the same thing. At first I thought this was simply the difference between single-coil and humbucking pickups. Upon further investigation, however, I found out that my Gibson Super 400 had 300K-ohm potentiometers installed in it instead of the normal 500K-ohm standard pots that had been used before. "So, that's where the problem was," I realized.

Some 14 years later, I found my jazz guitar soulmate in a Gibson Wes Montgomery L-5 model. I'll never forget what happened when I turned the tone control down to around 4: it sounded downright… well, right! The tone was big and smooth, and there was no need to go through the puddle of dark mud either. As it turned out, this dream L-5 I had just found had 500K-ohm pots installed stock from the factory. Another priceless tonal moment had occurred.

This leads me into another related subject, which is the use of volume pedals. A lot of people use these on their pedalboards to control just their overall volume level. When you control the guitar's volume from your instrument, you will notice shades of tonal variety as the volume control is decreased, whereas going the route of the volume pedal, generally speaking, demands that the instrument volume control remain on full—unless you have the volume pedal set all the way up (full forward throw) and you wish to use the instrument's volume control instead. That's the workaround if you ever find yourself in the one-tone territory. Going further into this, you will eventually find out that there are wide differences in the measurements of any particular batch of potentiometers. They might be marked 250K, but they can measure much less or much more than what's marked. I've seen some 250K pots measure as high as nearly 400K or as low as 190K. Because of this, I always have my guitar tech pick out potentiometers that are closely rated to avoid any possibility of losing my tonal integrity. I may seem to be nitpicking here to some folks, but to me my tone is important... because it's mine.

At the end of the day, individuality in tone is a huge part of your style, and if it is going to stand out from the crowd, you'll have to do some digging to find out exactly what makes all of the elements of your chosen signal chain work together in a way that shows your playing off in the most flattering light. There's nothing I can think of that can make you more pleased with your own music than finding yourself shining through every live (or recorded) performance. The moral of this story is to look into the reasons why something might be "off" for you, some odd thing that may have caused you to develop habits that ultimately limit you and keep you from your total and fullest musical expression. Armed with knowledge, you can get to where you want to be sooner rather than later. The devil is indeed in the details. We'll see you next month.

Dean Farley
is the chief designer of Snake Oil Brand Strings and has had a profound influence on the trends in the strings of today.

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PAT SMITH

Seemingly Small Tone Tweaks

The most overused saying on guitar forums is, "The tone is in your hands." This is what people say when someone seems too gear oriented. But the fact is that good tone, while in the ear of the beholder, involves a lot of stuff. For example, say you have a Strat and a Les Paul. While both guitars are solidbodies, they are made from different types of wood. The wood has a profound effect on tone. The wacky thing is that even if you have ten Les Pauls, they will all have differences in sound and feel. You already know there's an army of replacement hardware and pickups out there. Then there's the whole amp choice bit. It's pretty overwhelming!

So let's start with a couple of basic things you may not think much about. My goal here is to get you to actually think about the choices you make with your tone rather than just rolling on autopilot. After all, it is *your* tone.

Experiment with Fingers and Picks

I think the single most underrated tone ingredient is what you pluck the string with. Fingers (with nails or skin), flat pick, fingerpicks—try it all as you pursue your tone. Many players never give this a thought. With just your fingers you can get a wide variety of tones. Try letting your nails grow out a bit and use them. You can change your tone just by adjusting the angle of attack (this is also true with flat picks). Try brushing the string with your thumb à la Wes Montgomery. If you take the meaty part of your thumb, press the string, and let it snap, you get a very distinctive sound à la Mark Knopfler. Be sure to try picking in different spots along the string, closer to the bridge then farther away to go from bright to dark. Try pinch harmonics, like at the end of ZZ Top's "La Grange," or listen to Roy Buchanan do it. Pick the string, and as the pick crosses the string, let the meat on your thumb lightly hit the string too. To get this sound takes a bit of practice, so be sure to grip the pick fairly hard to make the flesh of your thumb protrude.

Try Different Plectra

Picks! There must be a zillion kinds of picks available. The two big things to consider are the thickness and the material it's made from. I've used Clayton acetal polymer small teardrop picks for decades now. I like the 1.90 thickness and I'm very used to it, but I am always trying out new picks to see what they do. There are companies making picks out of bone, horn, seashell, assorted woods, nylon, plastic, and on and on. Picks made of hard stuff tend to sound bright and soft stuff tends to sound dark. For a long time, the gold standard of picks was tortoiseshell. These days, tortoises are protected and black market tortoise picks can run upwards of $50—you shouldn't be using them anyway. Several makers have created synthetic tortoise picks, some of which are very close. Also, there's a whole market in super-thick "Django" gypsy jazz picks, but that's a whole story and technique of its own.

Many teachers start beginners with a thin or medium pick because they are a bit more forgiving of bad technique. As you advance, you may notice that thin picks flex. As you play a scale, you have to take into account both the flex of the pick and the flex of the string. Thin or thick, like all of this, is a personal choice. Take some time and try different things to see what works best for you, both in terms of your picking technique and your tone.

Fingerpicks, while not available in quite the variety that flat picks are, are available in more forms than ever before, but mainly in plastic or metal. The metal ones have the biggest variety of thicknesses, and can be open or closed on the fingertip. The thumb pick is the exception; there's a huge variety of these out there and materials and thicknesses vary widely. There are also some hybrid picks, like the Fred Kelly Bumble Bee, which is sort of a flat pick tacked to a thumb pick.

Check out Different Strings

Strings are another key aspect of sound. You must consider what they're made of: stainless steel, nickel, bronze, copper, nylon, and more. Also consider the way the string is made. Is it flatwound, half-round, polished, groundround, roundwound? So many choices. My point again is not to tell you what to do, but to get you think about what choices you make.

Do you want a bright sound? More sustain? Less sustain? With electric players, it tends to go like this: jazz players like flatwounds for their dark, staccato sound (flats are also less prone to feedback). The shred players seem to like the clarity and sustain of stainless steel round wounds. For my Tele, I like 100 percent nickel strings because they are darker sounding and have a nice, soft-yet-scratchy feel that I enjoy.

But Don't Stop There

Every aspect of playing electric guitar is part of a vast interconnected system, and each ingredient makes a difference. Even non-amplified acoustic players have many choices to make.

> Pay attention to your tone and make decisions about what sounds good to you.

Take courage, fellow pickerheads! Pay attention to your tone and make decisions about what sounds good to you. Do some research into the players you love and see what they use, but keep in mind that chances are good you'll sound a lot more like you than like them. You may even consider going to the insane edge of buying a guitar just because of the way it sounds rather than by what peghead shape it has. Yeah, okay… that might be going a bit far. See ya next time!

Pat Smith

Pat Smith founded the Penguin Jazz Quartet and played Brazilian music with Nossa Bossa. He studied guitar construction with Richard Schneider, Tom Ribbecke and Bob Benedetto, and pickin' with Lenny Breau, Ted Greene, Guy Van Duser and others. Pat currently lives in Iowa and plays in a duo with bassist Rich Wagor.

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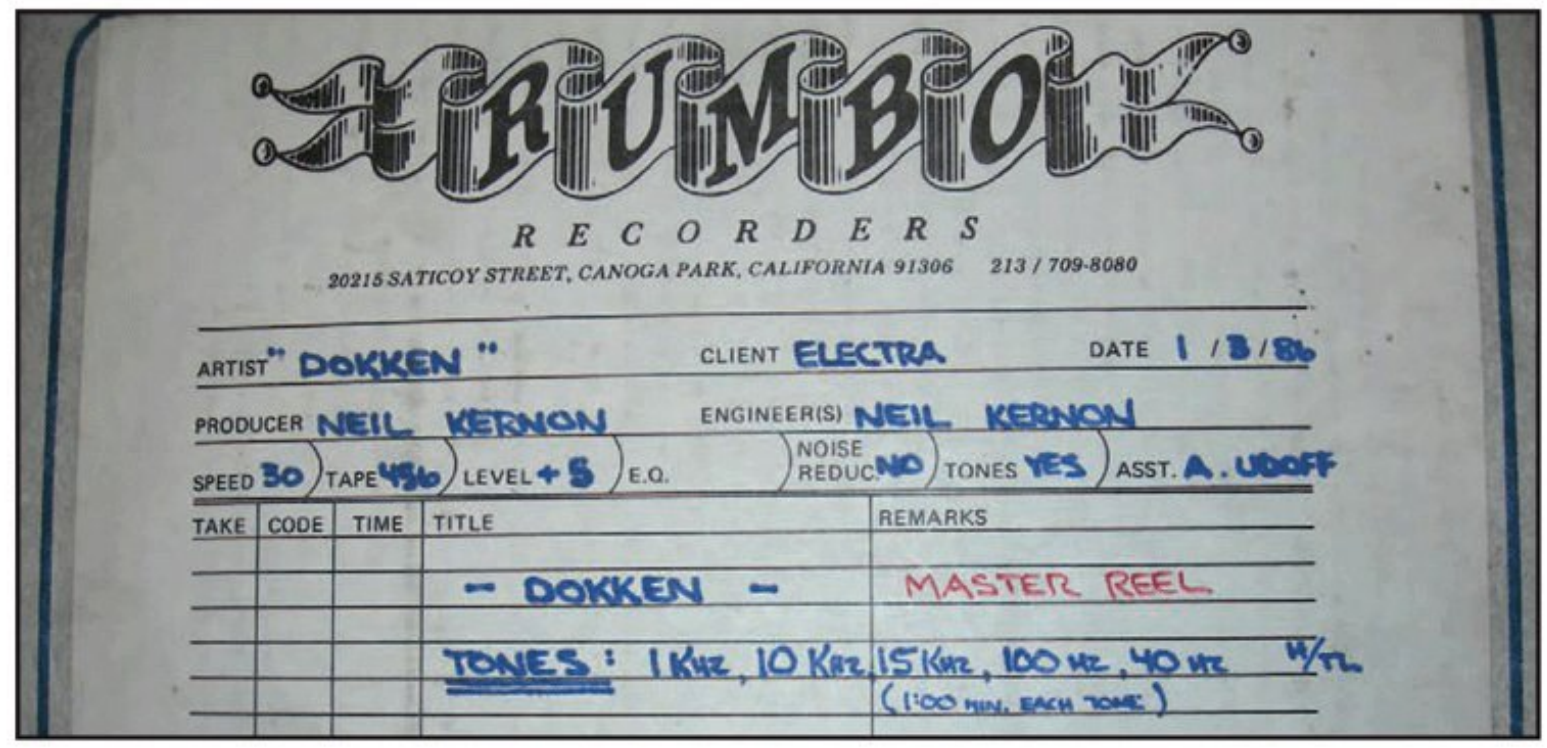
The sound engineers at OEM Inc. have spent thousands of hours with the original masters of the most famous songs ever recorded. They use them to create products like Jammit, an iPhone app that allows you to play along with those original tracks. There are many, many things to learn from those original tracks. Through a partnership with Gearhead Communications, OEM Inc. engineers are sharing their discoveries exclusively with Premier Guitar readers in what we like to call…

SECRETS of the Masters

"Dream Warriors" by Dokken

By Frank Gryner

From the album, *Back for the Attack* (1987 Elektra)
Produced by: Neil Kernon
Engineered [Assistant]: Andy Udoff
Recorded at: Rumbo Recorders (Canoga Park, CA)
Available in the JAMMIT "80's Rock Vol. 2" application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SPEED 30 TAPE 456 LEVEL +5 E.Q. NOISE REDUC NO TONES YES ASST. A. UDOFF

TAKE	CODE	TIME	TITLE	REMARKS
			- DOKKEN -	MASTER REEL
			TONES: 1 KHZ, 10 KHZ, 15 KHZ, 100 HZ, 40 HZ (1:00 MIN. EACH TONE)	W/TL

Daryl Dragon (the Captain of Captain and Tennille) boasted that his 10,000 square foot Rumbo Recorders recording studios nestled in the asphyxiating San Fernando Valley provided a low pressure and creative environment for his clients. Today the building is the kind of multi-purpose hall that gets rented out for wedding receptions and bar mitzvahs, but in early 1987 that environment of supposed creative tranquility is where the metal band Dokken dug in to commit "Dream Warriors" to tape. A particularly heightened animosity between singer Don Dokken and guitarist George Lynch is well-documented during this period of the band's history, leading fans to speculate if such fervor perhaps fueled the strident tones and fiery performances that would characterize the band's sound. It should be noted that "Dream Warriors" was recorded for the *Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* soundtrack. It was touched up and remixed months later when the band returned to the studio to record *Back for the Attack*, which is the band's most successful record to date.

A Nightmare on Saticoy Street?

Let's travel back in time 23 years by way of two Ampex 456 multi-track reels of analog tape. The place: Rumbo Recorders in Canoga Park, CA. The producer: Neil Kernon, who is most famous for producing Hall and Oats' big albums. With Mike Clink wrestling *Appetite for Destruction* into fruition down the hall, Kernon kept Dokken's volatile ingredients as separated as the 36 analog tracks that were used to capture "Dream Warriors." Penned by Lynch and bassist Jeff Pilson, this song is quintessential Dokken but with the romantic-but-still-tough lyrics directed toward a scissor-fingered villain instead of a Sunset Stripper. What better place to wallow in the self-pity of those "lonely nights" and one's thermal propensity to "feel the fire" than in a slasher flick soundtrack? This song might not be remembered for being a masterpiece of lyrical poetry, but the recording is a well-preserved time capsule of Lynch's monster tone in 1987.

Andy Udoff must have had his hands full. Credited as assistant engineer on two high-profile records being recorded simultaneously under the same roof may account for some of the errors in the documentation for this song. Assuming he was responsible for labeling these things (as assistants typically were), the track sheets and the tape boxes were erroneously dated January of '86 when it should have been for the following year. Apparently, sleep deprivation can cause an over-worked engineer to consistently misspell "warriors," as well. It's not unusual to have discrepancies in documentation with older tapes, and in a lot of cases finding the corresponding track sheets can be a victory in itself. So with all mislabeling aside, let's spool-up the 2" machine and hear what went down on Saticoy Street.

Exhuming the Boom

The unprocessed drums sound remarkably good. Not only did Mick Brown deliver a solid performance, but the separation and fidelity far exceeded that of previous Dokken albums. Like many other rock bands back then, Dokken was on the cusp of a technology and sonic growth that saw significant improvement throughout the '80s. This was most obvious in the drum sounds of the time. I found kick and snare room samples on the master tape to supplement the live drum performance. At that time, engineers commonly printed a pre-trigger by flipping the tape around to play backwards which allowed them to bounce the particular drum track to an available track through a delay unit. When the tape was played forward, that track would be gated and appropriately delayed in time to trigger the sample loaded in an AMS DMX 15-80 unit. This would have been a significant step up from having to get

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Photo by Neil Zlozower

that overblown sound entirely from the natural drum kit, and much easier than recording Brown's drums in an airplane hangar and then compressing/gating them in the studio off the master, which the band has been known to do.

Mr. Scary's Sweet Revenge

George Lynch's guitar tracks on "Dream Warriors" were a pleasure to hear in their raw state. His signature, chunky eighth-note chugs and unconventional chord inversions are the elements responsible for propelling this song into a fist-raising rock anthem. The primary axe for these sessions was Lynch's original tiger. The pre-ESP original was a heavy maple-bodied strat-style guitar equipped with a single Duncan SH-6 Distortion pickup at the time. The amp was a purple 100-watt Marshall plexi owned by and rented from Groove Tubes' Aspen Pittman. Refusing to sell the amp, Pittman frequently rented this amp to Lynch for sessions.

The main rhythm guitar parts were tracked in stereo from a single performance—either using two separate amps or just different cabinets. The stereo imaging of this pair is superb, with nice width in the higher frequencies tapering to the center for the lower midrange. This was due to separate mic placements in the room where a single Marshall 4x12 cabinet was situated. The phase relationship of these waveforms is impeccable and this explains why the guitars sound so full and aggressive in this song. These rhythm tracks are supported with a single mono guitar double. The clean arpeggiated guitars, which are another Lynch trademark, are layered with a thin, metallic-sounding DI acoustic guitar track.

I distinctly remember the "Dream Warriors" music video that showed Lynch's wrecking ball impersonation as he literally tore through a wall wielding his skeleton guitar—all to the initial bewilderment and eventual delight of an adolescent Patricia Arquette. Defiance by way of a ridiculous guitar solo entrance may come off as comical now, but this solo is no joke. Being able to isolate the actual track dry and audition these nuances in their rawest form was a privilege worthy of more than Arquette's painted-on admiration. I can almost taste the disdain for Don emanating from those precarious bends and the disorienting mélange of well-articulated notes cascading down like Plinko discs on *The Price is Right*. Lynch's tone is bold and never loses focus, plowing indiscriminately through the minor string rattles and pick-noise imperfections that get masked in the final mix. The boost used in the front end of the amp was an original square-buttoned Ibanez TS-808 overdrive pedal aided by the use of a BOSS GE-7 equalizer pedal with an accent on the mids being pushed above the zero point. This solo track is supplemented with a harmony lead that highlights and heightens this original performance. There was additional outro soloing other than what made it to the final mix, but Kernon extracted all the good stuff from this track and flew it into just the right spot to close out the song.

Unsung Hero

Don's lead vocal was well recorded. Like the drums and guitars, the track was full of presence and tonal character that didn't make it into the final, sloshy, '80s-centric mixdown that we've all grown accustomed to hearing. While Don may be the front man after which the band is named, Jeff Pilson may be the unsung hero of this song. Jeff sang the guide chorus vocals on a scratch track that was used to build the 18-voice harmony layers constructed later on the tape. These were combined, consolidated to four tracks and were then placed into each chorus of the slave reel. Judging by that and a verse harmony track labeled as "Jeff" on the track sheet, I suspect that he may have sung most of these background vocals. Incidentally, his scratch bass take (that was most likely recorded live when the drums were done) was very well thought out and note-for-note pretty much what ended up on the master bass take.

The Bitter End

While Captain and Tennille may have professed that "Love Will Keep Us Together," sadly, such was not the case with Dokken. "Dream Warriors" represents a career peak that was really just the beginning of the end for the band. Incarnations with different members and reunion attempts failed to recapture the magic of Dokken in their prime. Is it true that all good things must come to an end? Eventually, the significantly more popular Guns n' Roses crumbled apart due to similar internal band problems and, as mentioned earlier, the very walls holding up what was once the infamous Rumbo Recorders recording studios are now absorbing endless refrains of "The Chicken Dance" and "Hava Nagila."

Despite the traditional music industry's decline and the seemingly irresolvable feuds of so many bands, the recorded music of groups like Dokken will outlive all the egos and attitudes that broke them apart in the first place. Evidence of their significance isn't just immortalized in the mixes that we've come to know, the (now-digitized) individual tracks of these master tapes tell a backstory of their creation that will outlive the bands themselves, and the fading memories of those who were involved in their creation.

To see/hear how you can play along to (with tab) and make new mixes of "Dream Warriors" and other songs from the original multi-track masters, check out www.jammit.com

Frank Gryner is a multi-platinum engineer whose credits include bands like A Perfect Circle, *Matrix* Soundtracks, Rob Zombie, and Tommy Lee. Frank's technical expertise in audio system design has been applied to location studios for the likes of Filter, Perry Farrell and John Paul Jones.

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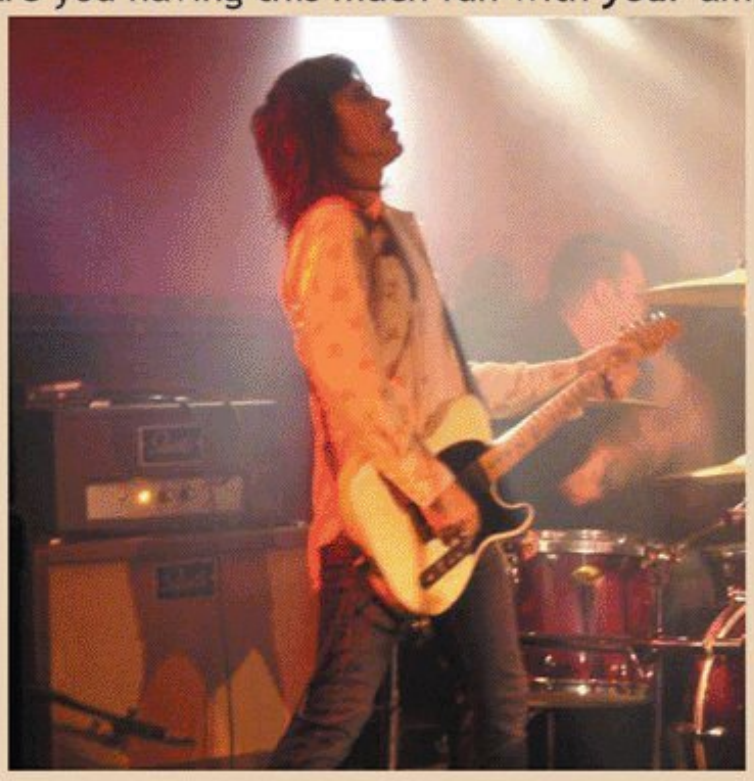

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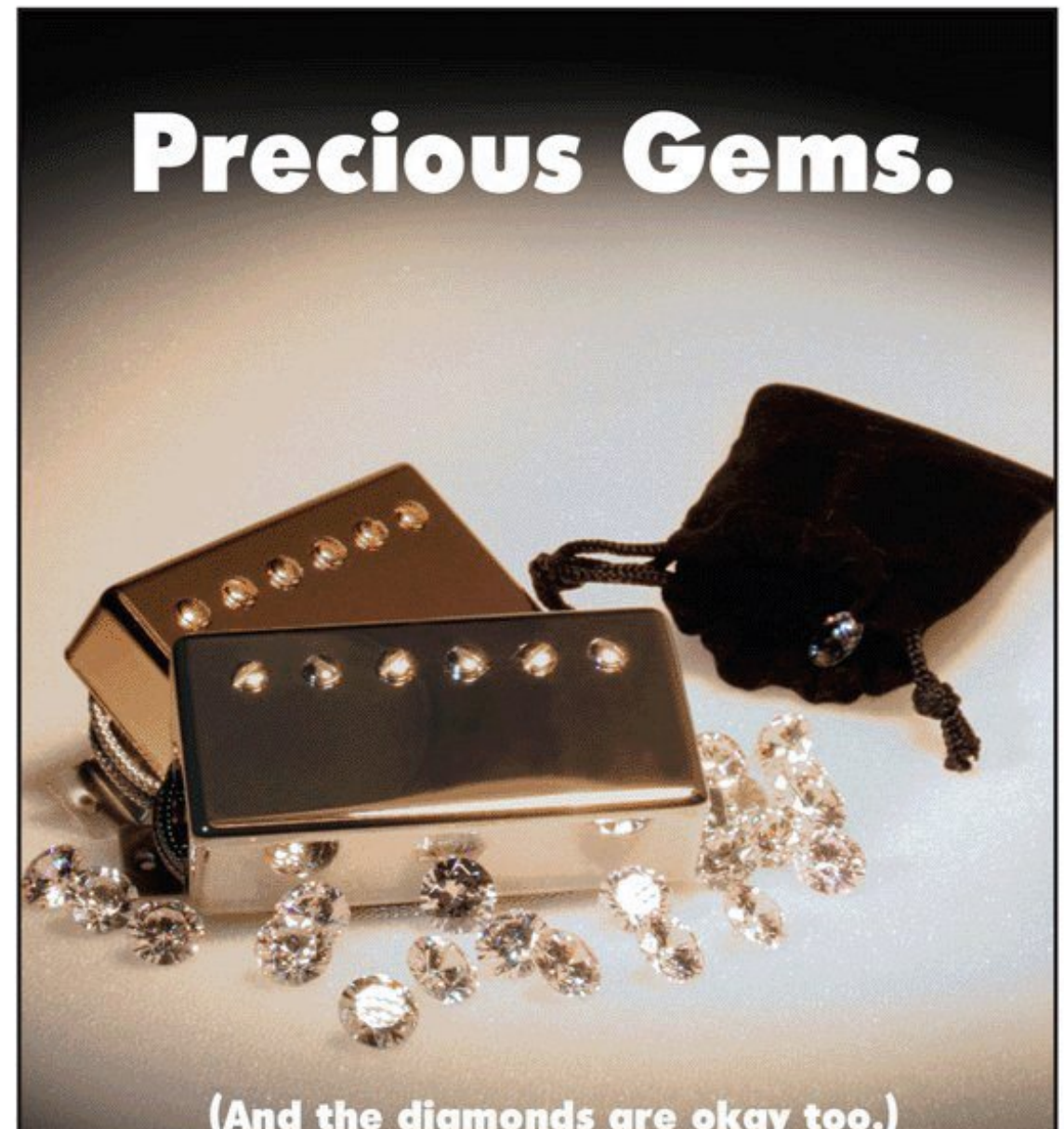

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ACE FREHLEY

NAVIGATING WITH THE SPACEMAN

Engineer Rich Tozzoli Talks with Ace Frehley about His New Album, *Anomaly*

BY RICH TOZZOLI

Twenty years. Few artists could wait that long between albums without their fan base being long gone. But not Ace Frehley. With his highly anticipated new album, *Anomaly*, he once again lays down a barrage of heavy riffs, catchy songs, and soaring solos just like those that influenced generations of guitar players—myself included. Having been one of the engineers who helped capture his new sound on *Anomaly*, I was able to get to know a different guy than the stage persona known to most of the world. Ace, who also produced the album, is celebrating his third year of sobriety, and you can tell: a deep passion for all things guitar shines through on this record. Forever experimenting and always open to new sonic ideas, he carved out a hard-hitting record that reminds many of his 1978 eponymous solo debut.

I caught up with Ace between tours to reflect on the making of *Anomaly*, his influences, and what lies ahead for him. ▶▶▶

Photo by Kevin Britton

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ACE FREHLEY
NAVIGATING WITH THE SPACEMAN

When you were getting ready to record parts for *Anomaly*, you often walked around the studio playing the guitars unplugged. What were you listening for?

That's what I do when I first buy any electric guitar. I always try to hear what the instrument will sound and feel like without any amplification. I discovered that when you're shopping for a Les Paul, Strat or Tele, nine times out of ten, whichever one is louder and feels like the whole body is resonating, that one usually sounds better through an amp. Also, when you're not sure how old the strings are, it's real apparent that they're not bright if you play without an amp.

Sometimes we used big heads with a cabinet, and sometimes we used small amps. From a playing and recording point of view, what does each give you?

I've always fooled around with little amps, even as early as the first Kiss records. I'd use them in combination with a 4x12 or a Marshall stack. It works well when you blend those sounds together. As much as everyone tries to recapture or fabricate a Marshall stack with a plug-in or whatever, there is nothing like the real thing. So when you combine big and small amps, you simply get a variety of tones. Small amps bring different textures that can't be replicated, either.

Most of the time, the signal path was straight in: just guitar, cable, and amp.

Yes. I guess I'm pretty much a purist. I really want what's coming out of the amp to go into the computer or whatever we're recording on. Once it's in there and it's right, you can always tweak it with plug-ins or by pumping it out again and re-recording. But when you get a really good amp sound direct, it can help you give a really good performance. The most important thing is capturing that performance, and if we need to change the tone a little bit, we can effect it down the road.

How did you decide on using the blend of Les Pauls, Strats and Teles?

I've been doing that since my first solo record. I had a couple of old Teles and Strats lying around, and I discovered it just created a great blend. Since they all have completely different harmonic ranges, they can create a much fuller sound when mixed in with each other. You can also get a lot of different sounds, depending on how you split them in the mix. I also discovered that I'll play something slightly different on a Strat or Tele than I would on my Les Paul, simply because of the difference in the body and fingerboards. If you double something on each of those guitars, it's slightly different in the way you finger it. When you put them together, that little difference makes it that much better. I remember recording *Destroyer* with Bob Ezrin, and he told me to knock my guitar a little out of tune before I did a double because the frequencies would make a rub with each other. And it really worked!

Let's talk about that unusual, resonating doubleneck sound you got on your new version of "Fractured Quantum."

I discovered that with Eddie Kramer when I was doing the original "Fractured Mirror" on my '78 solo album. We had a room filled with amps and the control room was outside the Colgate Estate in a Fedco truck mobile unit, so we could use all the amps without worrying about feedback—because the control room was so remote. I remember turning everything up to 10 on a lot of different amps. One day, I happened to be playing the doubleneck and I didn't have the other neck's pickup off—I forgot which neck I was playing. It was all coming out of the amp through the other pickup, too, even though I wasn't playing that neck. It had this really cool bell sound. And if you remember, we kept making notes while we were recording "Fractured Quantum" this time

Ace performing in Detroit, Oct. 31, 1987. Photo by Ken Settle.

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so I would remember to use that effect again. It was just something I stumbled upon by accident—the way most inventions happen.

We also used a 7-string, a guitar in Nashville tuning and several 6- and 12-string acoustics.

I got that idea of layering acoustic guitars from Pete Townshend. If you listen to early Who records, even the electric songs sometimes have acoustics tucked underneath. That's why I started experimenting, not only with Teles and Strats along with my Les Paul, but also with acoustics. Sometimes you can put one in a rock song and not have it loud, just underneath. It adds a fullness that you don't really hear until you take it away. When you listen to the song, you think it's all electrics. Songs like "Genghis Khan" and some of the others have that sound layered in there.

"Genghis" also has an alternate tuning, doesn't it?

Yeah, the rhythm-track tuning is just something I came up with one day. I raised the high E up to F♯. It makes a very cool chord sound, especially in the G position. For the intro, I just downtuned a bunch of strings and recorded the intro separately, I don't even remember what I did! Maybe Alex wrote it down when we did it. Will Pang also helped me do another track on that song one night. There are so many tracks!

On "It's a Great Life," you went in a new direction with the solo.

I usually come up with solos that lend themselves to the type of song they're in. This one went off in left field because I've never written anything quite like that song. The first thing that came to mind was playing around with an octave run, kind of like a jazz player. We also used a small, old Fender amp with a Jensen speaker, and that made it that much cooler sounding.

One thing I noticed working with you was the strength of your rhythm playing. How did you develop such a solid feel?

I was really inspired by Keith Richards, but even more so by Pete Townshend. I was such a huge fan when I was a kid, and I used to sit next to the record player and figure out every Who song. What amazed me was the way Townshend did his multiple strums. Playing a lot of Who music really helped develop my right hand, which helped with not only my rhythm technique but my leads, too. I remember also—though I haven't thought it about in years—I used to hang out with this crazy black dude when I was a kid. I was about 15 and he was 22 or so. We used to play in the veterans hospital on Kingsbridge Avenue in the Bronx. He loved the Stones, and I would go over there with him and a drummer, and he made me play the same song over and over for like half an hour! He'd dance and sing and go crazy to the point where my hand was falling off. We weren't getting paid. We were just trying to make these guys happy. Since I was the only guitar player, I couldn't play a lot of lead, so by the end of the set my hands hurt. But I have to thank him for that, because he pushed me and it just made me a stronger, better guitar player.

You brought Anton Fig—who played drums on a lot of your early solo work—back for this album. Does playing with him help you play better? ▶▶▶

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ACE FREHLEY
NAVIGATING WITH THE SPACEMAN

Ace with his doubleneck tracking "Fractured Quantum." Photo by Rich Tozzoli.

I met Anton around the time I was putting songs together for my first solo album when I was with Kiss. He had only been in the country for a few years, because he'd grown up in Cape Town, South Africa, and had been around that amazing beat his whole life. Eddie Kramer heard his demos and asked if he wanted to work with me. Ironically, I had another friend, Larry Russell, who also heard Anton play and came to me independently and said he had a great drummer for me. To me, that's karma, so I jumped at the chance to jam with him. We've been close friends ever since. The greatest things about Anton are his fills and the space he leaves. He doesn't try to fill up everything, and I really like the fact that he plays slightly behind the beat, à la John Bonham. A lot of drummers play *on* the beat, and when they get excited and the adrenaline is pumping they play ahead of the beat, which gives some songs a nervous feel. I like to have a relaxed feel, and Anton always holds the song back with a solid rhythm. Me and Anton have been playing so long together we almost have this telepathic communication, where I'll think something and he'll do it, or I'll just look at him and he'll know what I'm thinking. Things come together so quickly, and it's just a joy to work with him.

You used some of the players in your live band on the record as well, didn't you?

Yes. When we first started tracking at Schoolhouse Studios, Anthony was a big part of putting this all together. I developed a lot of these songs with him. He's a real strong bass player and added a lot to these songs, as did Anton Fig. Then we moved up to Ace In The Hole Studios, and it was a whole different mix. Derek Hawkins, who plays guitar with me, helped a lot when we started tracking there. He helped me think through a lot of the parts, and he showed me the dropped-D tuning for "Outer Space." Derek also did the slide runs on that song, which sound great. He laid down the original bed track of that song and really helped with it. Scot Coogan, who also plays drums with me live, sang background on "Pain in the Neck." He really helped me with "Sister," which he also played drums on and sang on. Scotty is more of a live drummer, and he really bought that track up.

Sometimes you liked to track in the control room and sometimes in front of the amps. Why?

Well, you play differently when you're standing in front of an amp and are bombarded with the sound, especially if it's loud. It's great, but sometimes you struggle with hearing the track in the headphones. Actually, sometimes I don't care if I can hear the track, as long as I can hear the beat. But, most of the solos I chose to track in the control room, because I wanted to hear what was going into the computer. It's a little less insane, too. There are advantages to standing with the amp, but there are advantages to sitting in the control room, if you know that what you hear through the speakers is the real sound. When you're out in the room, you're not exactly sure what the recorded sound will be.

How was it working with different engineers on various parts of the record?

The basic tracks were recorded at my live bassist Anthony Esposito's Schoolhouse Studios on 27th Street in New York. It's really live feeling in there, and Jay Messina did those tracks. Working with Jay is always great, because I've done so many projects with him, going back to *Destroyer* and so on. He always adds something with the way he mikes things, and his room miking technique with drums gives you more flexibility when you're mixing later on. So that was a great way to kick off the album. Then I moved everything up to my studio in New York, which is a different room sound, with different gear and so on. That's when I started working with you and Alex Salzman and Tim Hatfield. All of you guys added something special. When it came to tracking guitar solos, I thought working with you was probably the most exciting, because when I started playing great solos and getting great sounds it made you excited, which would make me more excited! It was a good marriage there, and you kept pushing me to do more takes. Those were probably some of my best solos. Marty Frederiksen also mixed the record and did some engineering, in addition to playing bass and singing backgrounds on "Fox On The Run." He really helped the guitar parts breathe better. But everybody did a great job. I learned so much by watching you guys on Pro Tools. It's the best education I could have gotten. It's not only a good feeling to be more knowledgeable now, but it also helps me because now when I go into a studio with an engineer I've never worked with before, I know whether they're doing it right or not! When I think about editing, say back with Eddie Kramer and Bob Ezrin, it was all on two-inch tape. We'd have to slice the tape and put it back together to see if it worked. If it wasn't cut exactly where we wanted, we'd end up with little slices of tape all over the machine. It was such a nightmare. Now, it's amazing. I really appreciate how great it is to edit with programs like Pro Tools.

You recorded some tracks on the record by yourself, too, right?

On "A Little Below the Angels," I actually didn't like my original vocal. I redid them because I felt like I was singing with almost a country twang. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted to change it, so I took the AKG mic one night at 5 a.m. and ran it through an Avalon preamp—I actually engineered it myself. It came out very natural and not pushed, because I was really relaxed. I

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just dropped it onto a portable hard drive and brought it out to LA for the mix. But I don't actually like recording myself, because you have to think too much and it can take away from the performance.

Many people may not realize how into computers you are.

[*Laughs*] Yeah, I had the first Mac computer. I had one of the first IBMs and a Commodore, too. I was a kid when the whole computer revolution began, so I've always been into them. I had the first Radio Shack 4K computer—4K! Imagine having a computer with 4K of memory! Back then, if you mentioned 4GB, someone would've thought it was for the military or outer space. We didn't even talk about that much memory back then.

So what's next for you?

Well, I finished a successful European tour, and I'm getting ready to go out again to Australia. Dates in the States will be coming up, and I'll be doing festivals in Europe this summer. I've got a "Behind the Player" DVD coming out, and I've already been writing for the next record. I also plan on doing a cool DVD with computer animation that I'll score. I pride myself on thinking outside the box, and I'm probably like that because I'm not a schooled musician. One of the reasons people may think I have a unique style is because I'm self-taught and make mistakes—or I do things in a way that, if I'd been taught by a teacher, they would've corrected. To me, there are no rules, and there never were.

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According to the man himself, Ace's rig both onstage and in the studio has always been relatively straightforward: "On the early Kiss records, I used my tobacco sunburst Gibson Les Paul Standard with a rewound hot pickup, through a Marshall stack or old Fender tweed amp, on most of the studio recordings. I used an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff to overdrive them sometimes. Later, I got a cherry sunburst Les Paul Custom and an old '59 Les Paul Standard, which dominated my studio recordings in the late '70s. My 1978 solo album, *Ace Frehley*, really shows off what a Les Paul guitar can do in the studio. I recorded almost the whole album exclusively with my 1959 vintage sunburst Les Paul. I use Gibson Les Paul Customs live because they're simply the best guitars for loud rock 'n' roll. I've always said, 'Just plug a Les Paul into a Marshall amp and turn it up to 10!' It's a no-brainer."

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The JCM900 SL-X and 5150 II in the control room.

Recording *Anomaly*

The AC15 used on "Genghis Kahn."

Royer 122V and Shure SM57 up close on a Marshall cabinet.

BY RICH TOZZOLI

On *Anomaly*, Ace used several engineers, since the project spanned a long period of time. Jay Messina (Aerosmith, Cheap Trick, Kiss, Peter Frampton) tracked the drums and basics at Schoolhouse Studios in NYC to get things started. Then the drives went home to Ace In The Hole studios in Westchester, NY. There, Alex Salzman and I finished off most of the overdubs, along with Tim Hatfield. In L.A., Ace tracked "Fox On The Run" and mixed the project with Marty Frederiksen and Anthony Focx.

I kept thorough notes on what mics, amps and preamps were used on each song (as well as taking pics), so that if we came back to a song a month or more later, we could remember the setups. For most of the electric tracks, I used a Royer 122V tube ribbon mic or a Royer 121, along with either a Sennheiser MD 421 II or the classic Shure SM57. At first, we also used room mics, but they were rarely used in the mix, so we eventually just settled on close mics. Ace liked the mics to be right up on the speakers, which does provide some proximity bass and a very up-front sound.

The variety of amps included a Marshall JCM900 SL-X, Peavey 5150 II, Vox AC15, Fender Princeton, Twin Reverb, Bassman combo, Mesa/Boogie MK IV, and several others. Preamps were a mix and match of Universal Audio LA-610, Avalon VT 737sp, Earthworks 1024, and Focusrite ISA428, as well as some others.

When cutting acoustic parts, I'd use a variety of mics, from AKG 414s and Earthworks QTCs to a single AKG C 12 VR "The Tube" with a modified capsule. That was the primary vocal mic

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Ace's selection of 'bursts.

used on the record as well. We also used the DI output on any acoustics that had one, just to have the extra sonic options later.

For acoustic guitars, Alex used an ADK SC-T mic on the neck, with the AKG 414 on the body. He also used an esoteric Chinese Stellar tube condenser, as well as a Tech 21 SansAmp acoustic DI. He used mostly the Focusrite ISA428 and the UA 610 on the amps, capturing the sound with a pair of SM57s—one straight at the cone and one at a 45-degree angle next to it. The Peavey 5150 II was the primary head he recorded Ace with, but he also used a small Peavey Bandit amp for certain overdubs with a 57.

Alex also recorded two tracks of drums with Anton in Ace's live room. He used an AKG D 112 on the kick, a pair of the ADKs as overheads, an AKG 414 on bottom of snare, an SM57 on top, as well as Sennheiser MD 409s on the toms. He also tracked vocals with the AKG "The Tube" and a 414, using mostly the Focusrite ISA 428.

I asked Marty Frederiksen how he hooked up with Ace for this project. This is his reply: "Me and Anthony Focx were mixing songs for the *Guitar Hero: Metallica* and *Guitar Hero: Aerosmith* games and David Iscove told Ace about us. He said, 'You should have Marty mix the record,' and Ace was out in L.A. and came by a few days later. That's how it all happened."

I also asked Marty how the record was mixed, and how they did the guitars on "Fox on the Run," and this is what he told me: "We mixed it all in Pro Tools, with things like the URS and SSL channel strip plug-ins. You know, we used all the good stuff that's available out there! The whole approach was that he wanted to keep it as old school as possible. The fact of the matter is we ended up tightening a few little things, but it was pretty much all there. We didn't put everything on the grid, but like most records, if something just needed a nudge here and there, we did it.

We used drum samples with the real drums, just to give it a big sound. That also helped tie up a long recording process of his and make it sound like one record.

"For 'Fox on the Run,' we went DI, using Digidesign's Eleven. I played a little on that track as well, some rhythm and some bass, and Brian Tichy played drums. We really knocked that one out and did it in about a day. Overall, it's a heavy, riff-based record with some great songs. He got to lay down some killer parts on all his songs without anyone telling him what to do. We kind of cleaned it up a bit, killed a couple of guitars if there was too much going on, but it's all Ace. He's a guitar hero, and I just felt we could help him tie it all together to make a cohesive-sounding record. It came out great." PG

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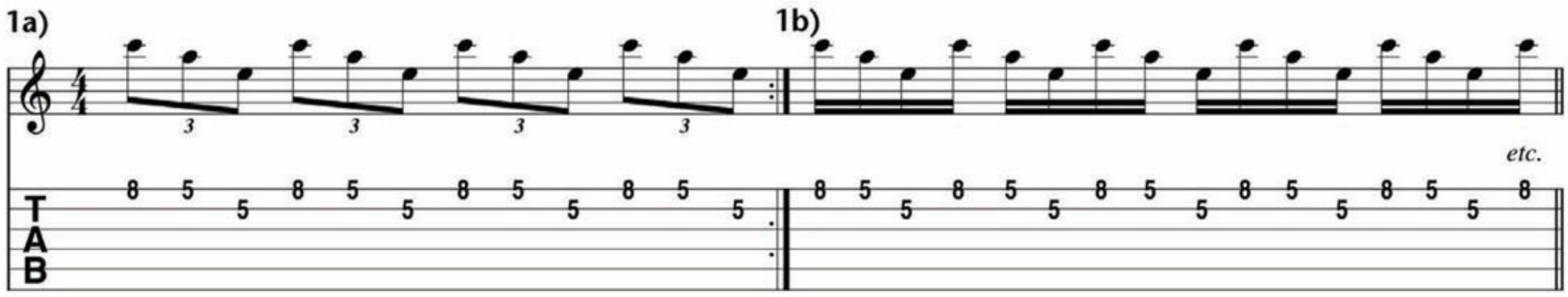
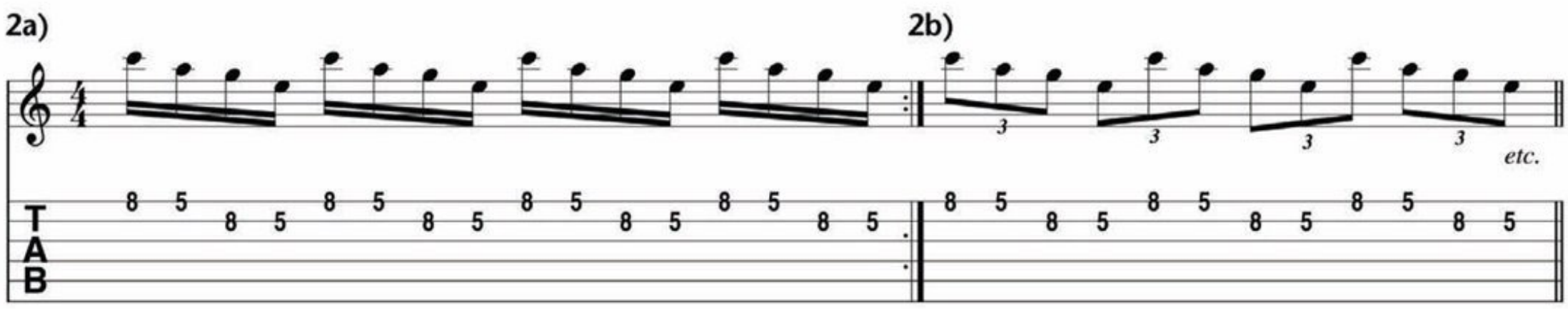
Repeating Licks

Pentatonic Lead Basics

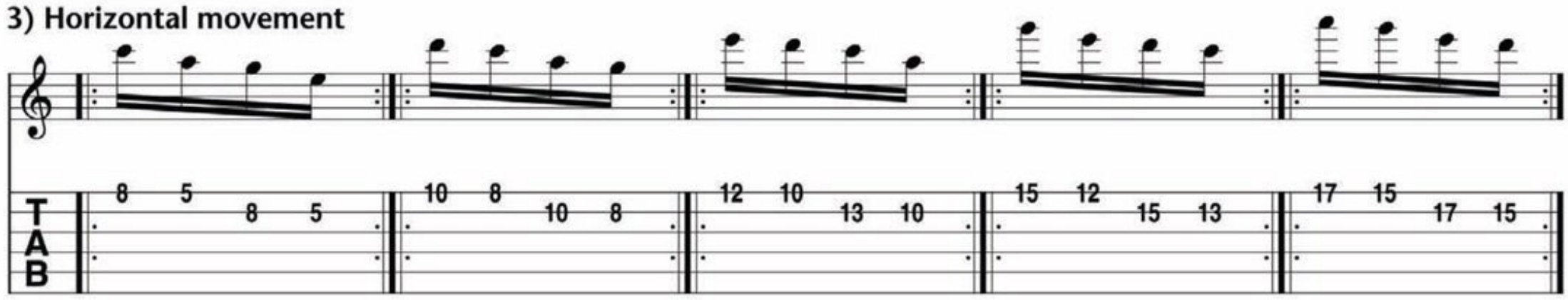
BY THORSTEN KOBER

Here are some repeating patterns using the A minor pentatonic scale that you can use when soloing. Examples 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b provide the basic patterns. Examples 3 and 4 move the 2a pattern through horizontal and vertical treatments, while examples 5 and 6 do the same with the 1b pattern.

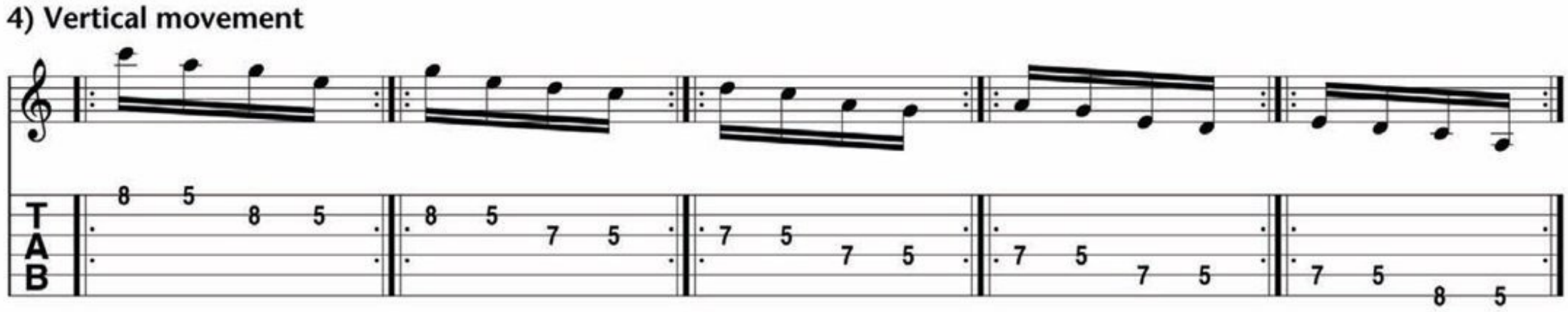




3) Horizontal movement



4) Vertical movement



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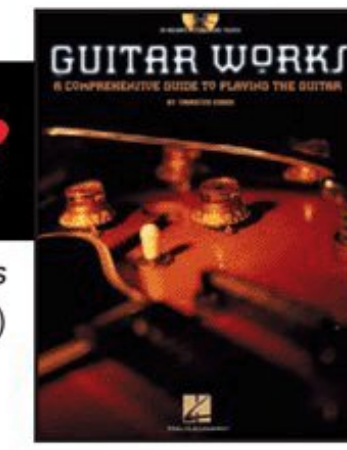
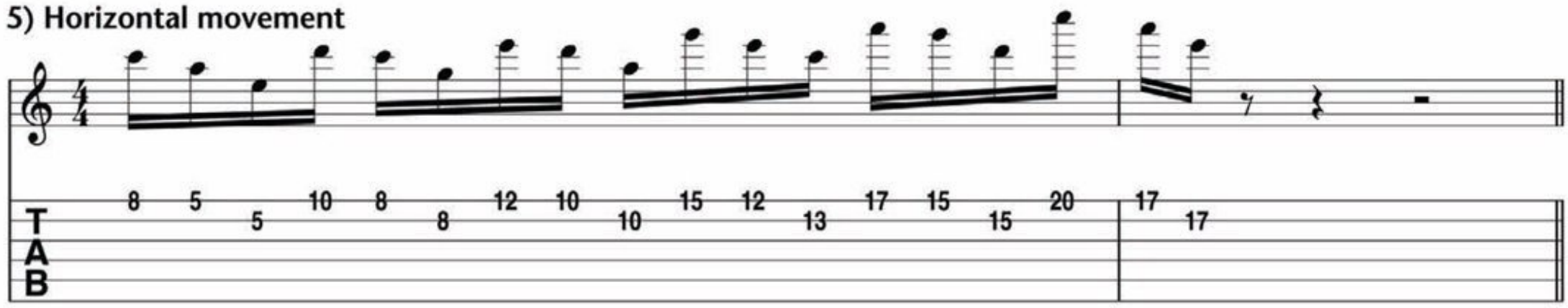
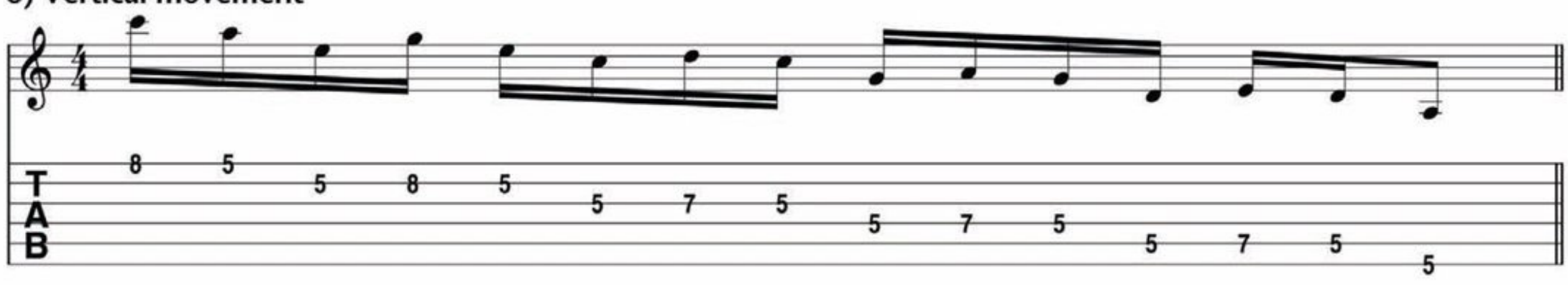


From *Guitar Works*
(00695653)

5) Horizontal movement

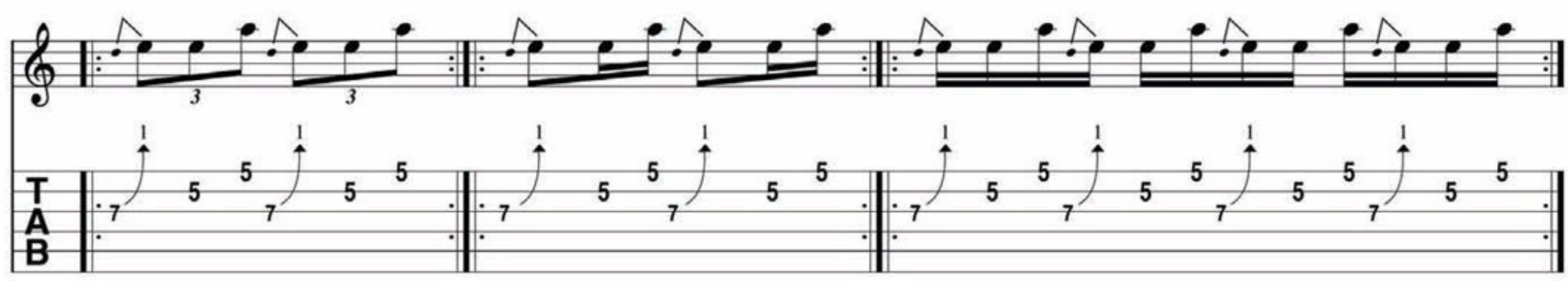


6) Vertical movement

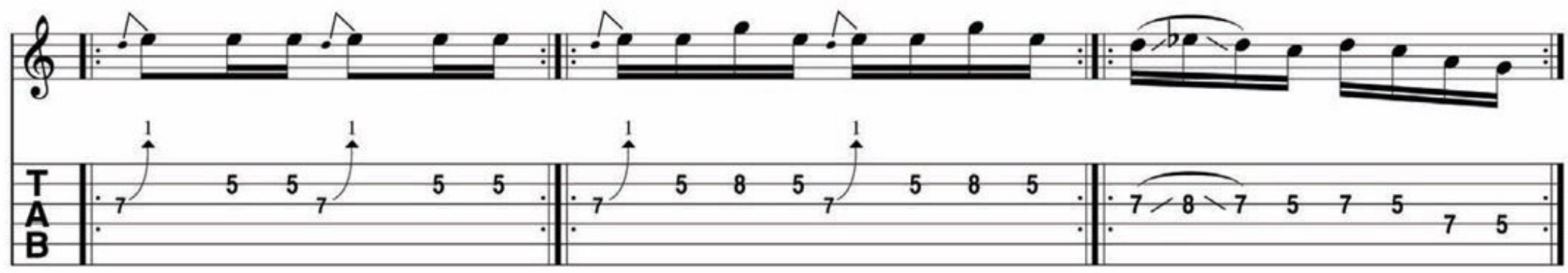


Bends and Slides

Now we're going to treat our A minor pentatonic and blues scales to two expressive techniques: bends and *slides*. In the examples below, we're going to be bending the D note on the seventh fret, third string up a whole step to the note E. Using your third finger on the note with the first and second fingers behind it for support, bend the string up until the pitch matches the note E. You can test this by bending the note and then checking the pitch against the E on the second string, fifth fret. For the remaining E and A notes on the fifth frets, use your first finger and "roll" the pressure from the second string to the first string. You could also barre the first two strings and let the notes ring together; these licks are commonly played using both methods.



In the next example, we see a variation of our bending lick, as well as a sliding lick that makes use of the A minor blues scale. For the slide, use the third finger to slide up the E♭ and back down to the D again.



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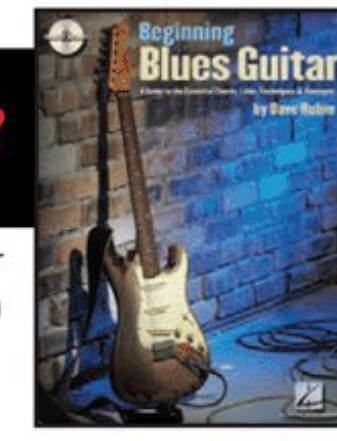

From *Beginning Blues Guitar*
(00695916)

Riff Blues

Two Essential 12-Bar Patterns

BY DAVE RUBIN

Riffs are some of the most characteristic sounds of the blues. In a nutshell, they may be constructed of bass lines, double stops, or single notes—or a combination thereof. Here is a classic example that contains bass lines and double stops which form a catchy, repeatable riff. Notice how the bass line is the same for the I, IV, and V chords, save each chord's respective root note. ▶▶▶

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Riff Blues, cont.

The next example alternates measures of walking bass lines with measures of double stops to create a more expansive riff pattern. Dig how the bass line follows each chord change while the I-chord double stops contain only one different note than the IV-chord double stops.

Click here for sound clips for this lesson.

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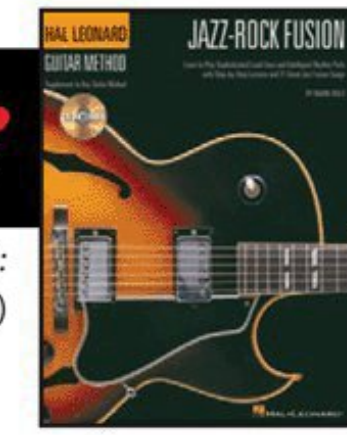


From *Hal Leonard Guitar Method: Jazz-Rock Fusion* (00697378)

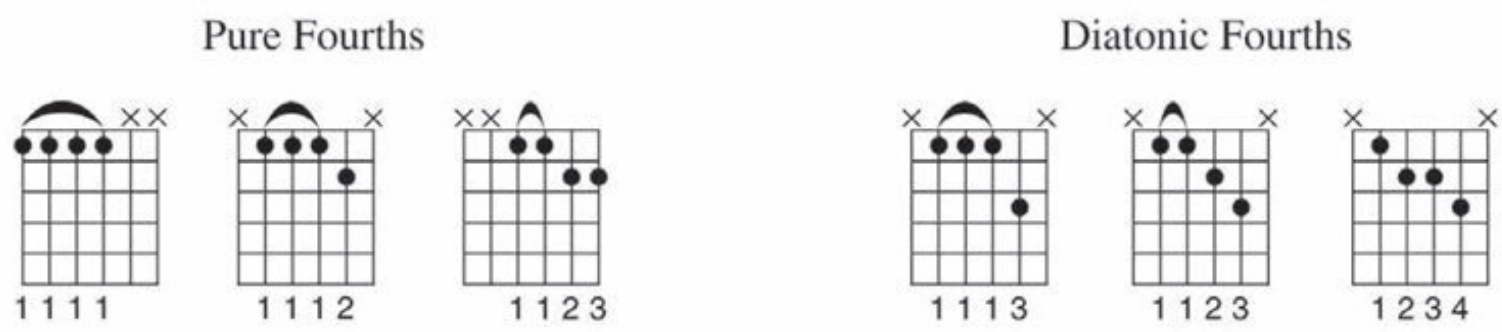
Quartal Voicings

Multi-Purpose 4th Forms for Jazz and Fusion Chording

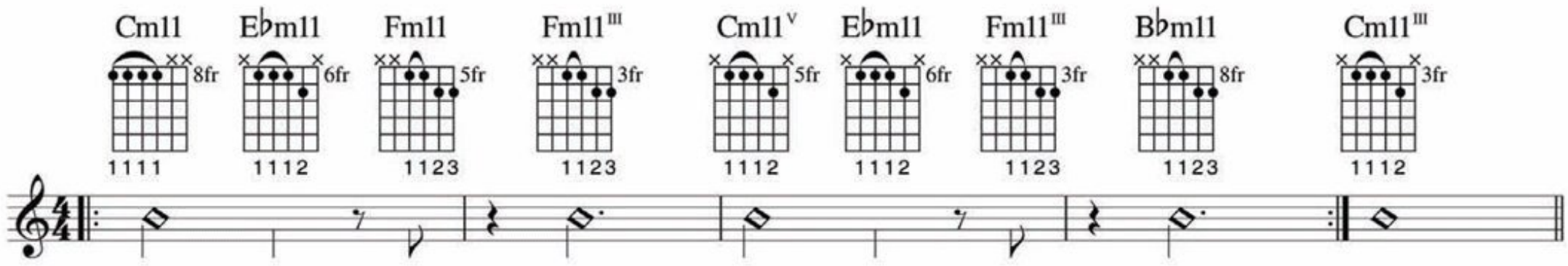
BY MARK HULS

Interval Structures

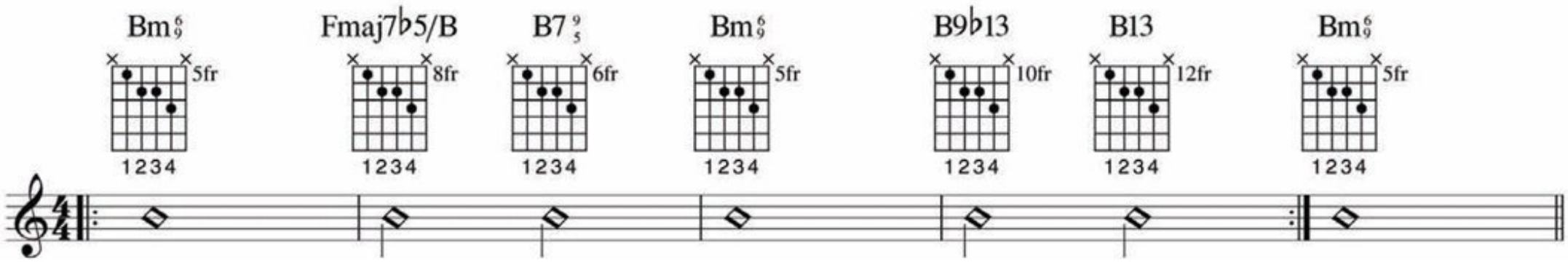
Chords forms may also occur based on an interval pattern outside of the conventionally stacked 3rd forms. Quartal voicings are forms built on a pattern of 4ths. They occur as either pure 4ths, in which only the interval of a perfect fourth exists between chord tones, and diatonic fourths, which incorporate a different interval in combination with 4ths to accommodate a certain relationship. The diatonic fourth forms below illustrate the incorporation of an augmented 4th. However, any interval may be coupled with 4ths to form different chords.



These forms can function as several different chords depending on what note of the form is determined to be the root. In the following figure, they function in one of their most common roles: m11 chords.



The root of a chord form may also be a surrounding note not in the form. In cases such as these, it's nice to have a bass player on hand to cover the root. In the following figure, the last of the previous diatonic 4th forms is shifted to various spots along the neck to play each of the "B" chords, with the roots of Bm6/9, B7♯9♯5, and B13 not directly contained in the form. On the accompanying track, the bass drones a B root throughout the progression.



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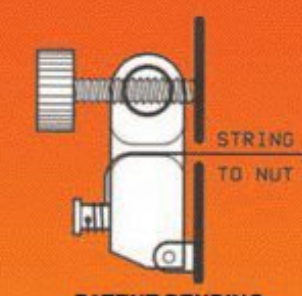

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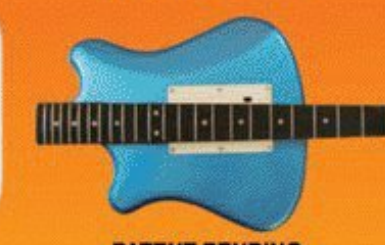
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Open G Tuning

New Ideas for the Blues and Beyond

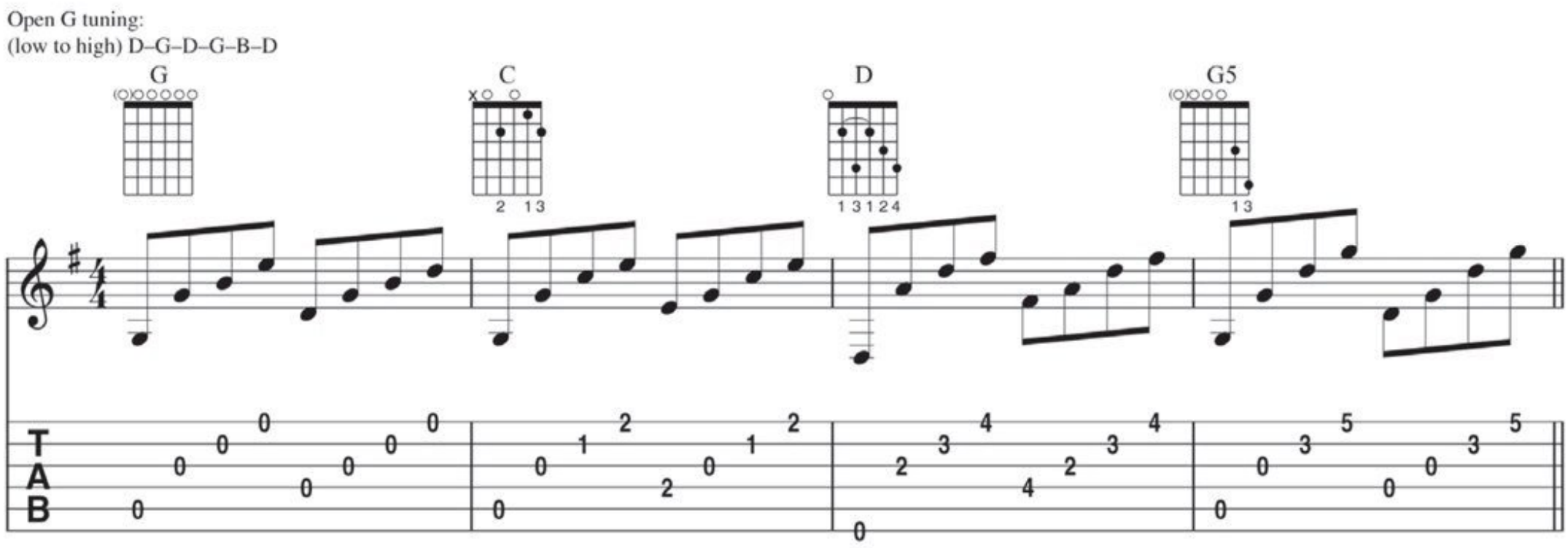
BY CHAD JOHNSON

From the bluesmen of the Delta to the Rolling Stones, open G tuning (low to high, D–G–D–G–B–D) has seen plenty of action over the years. It not only allows you to play a chord (G major) with absolutely no fretting but also facilitates the easy, one-finger moveable barre chord. Here's how to access open G tuning, from standard tuning:

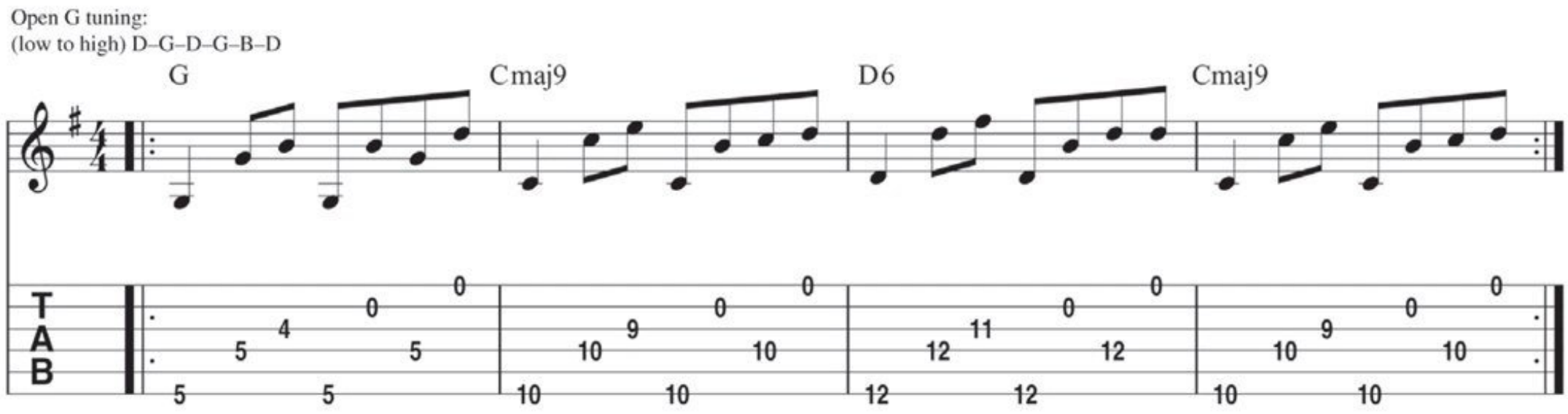
- Tune your sixth string down one whole step to match the pitch of your open D string.
- Tune your fifth string down one whole step to match the pitch of your open G string.
- Now tune your first string down one whole step to match the pitch of your open D string.

That's it—you're in open G.

Let's take a look at some fresh-sounding chord shapes in this tuning's home key of G. Notice how the standard I, IV, and V chords sound fresh and alive again in this tuning.



In this next example, we're just moving a single chord shape up and down the neck while allowing the open first and second strings to drone. Listen to the full-sounding chords that result.



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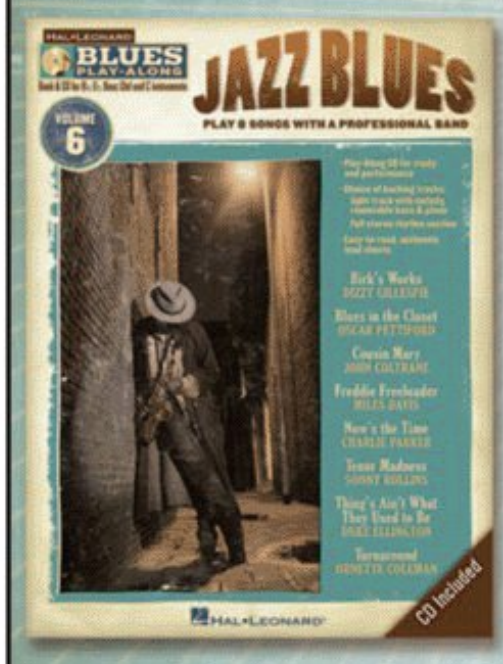

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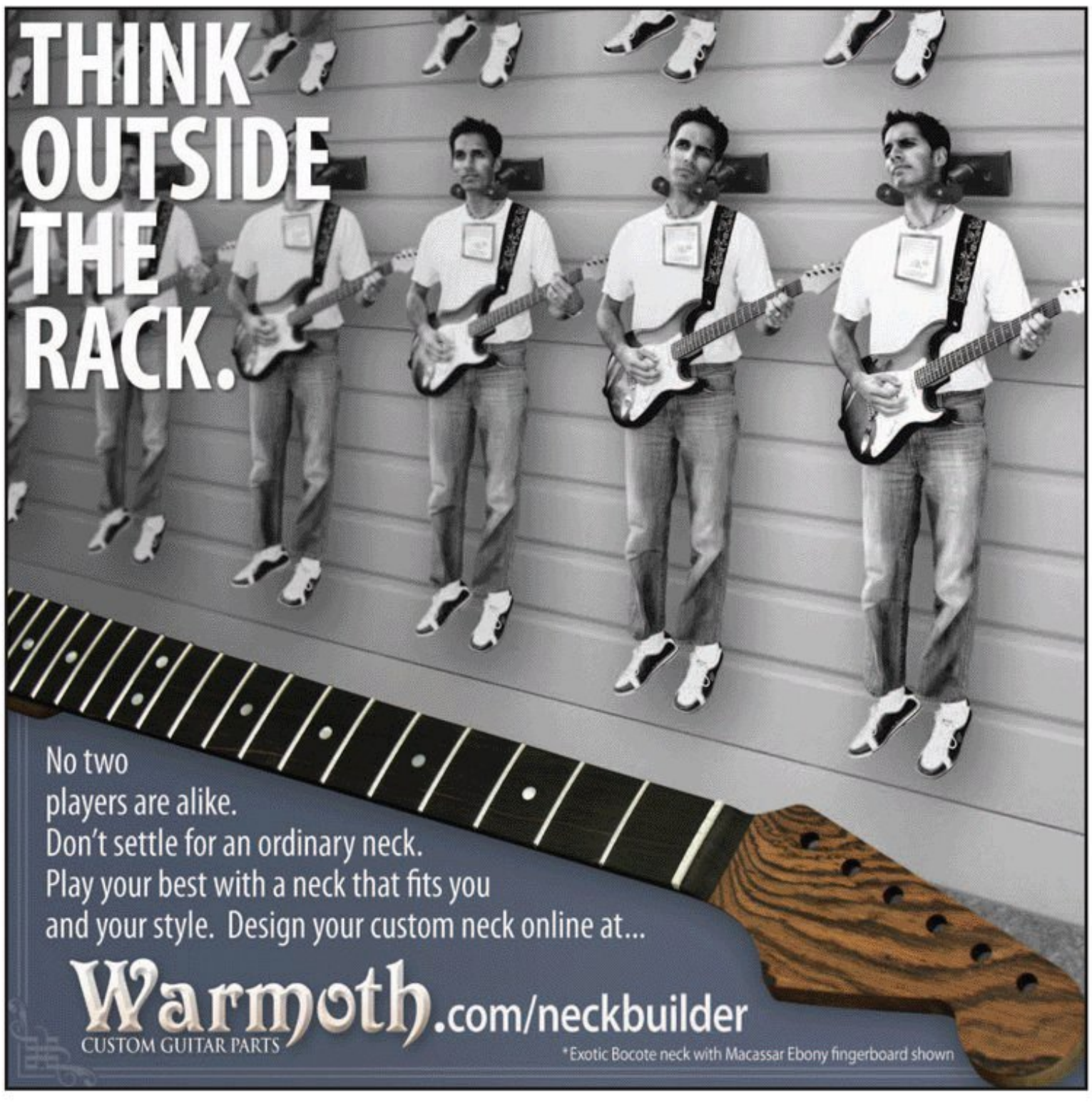

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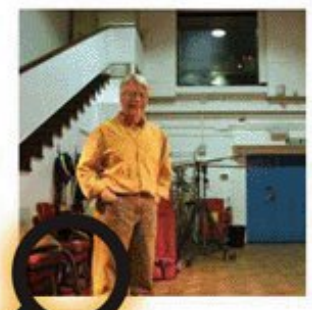

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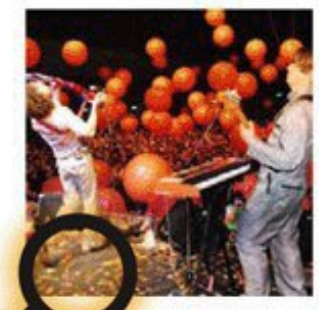

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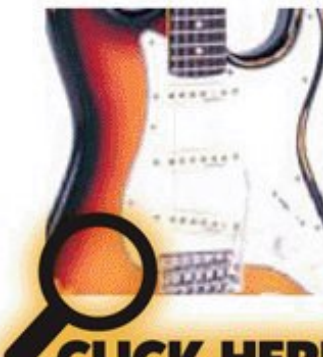

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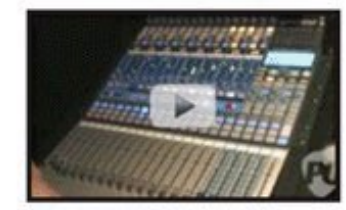

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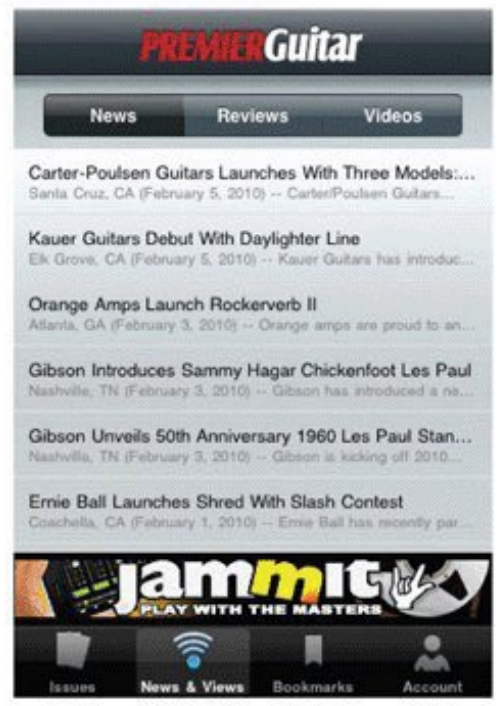

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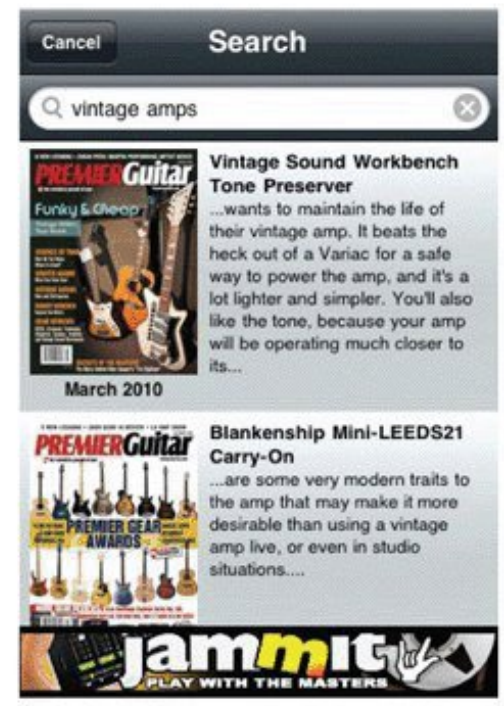

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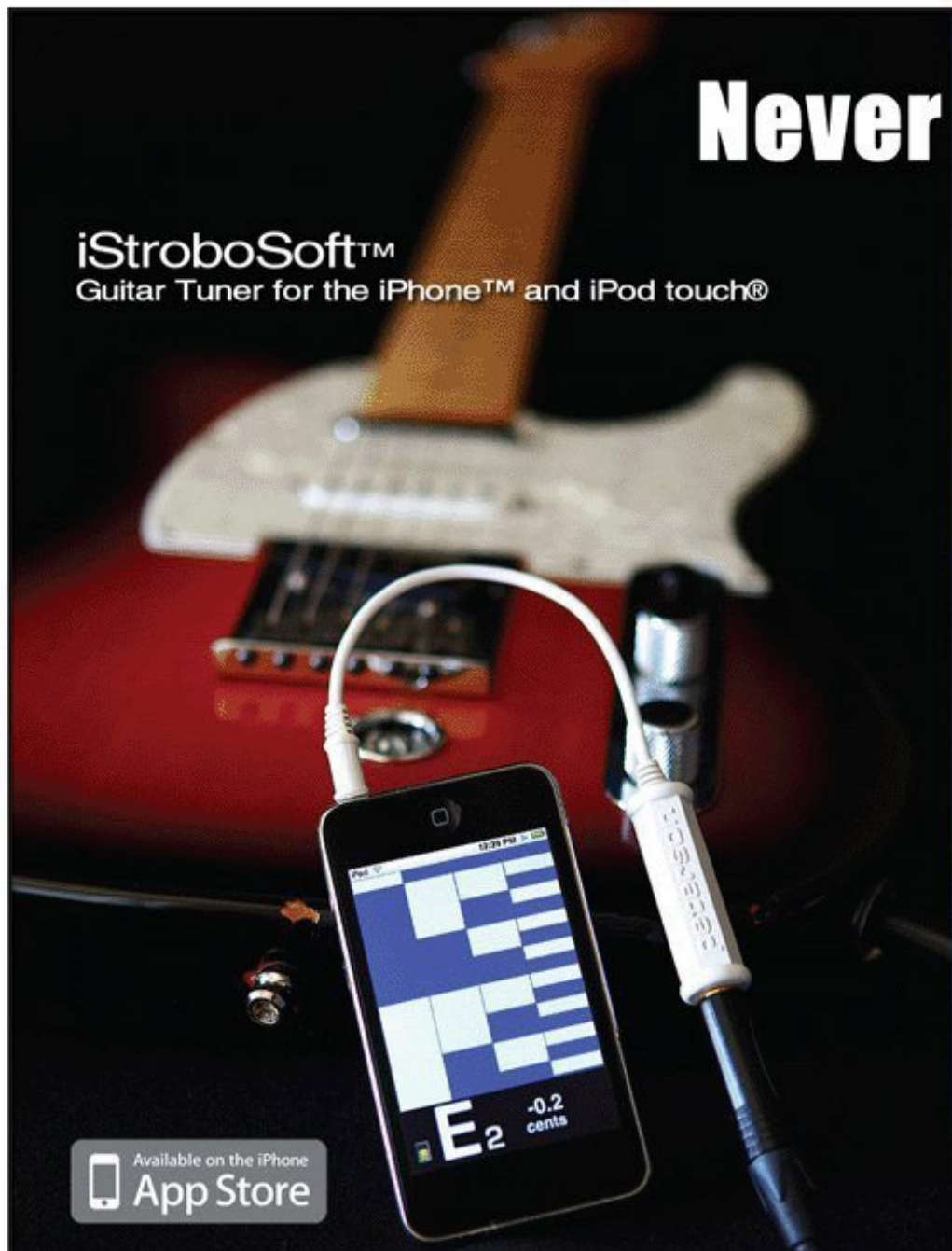

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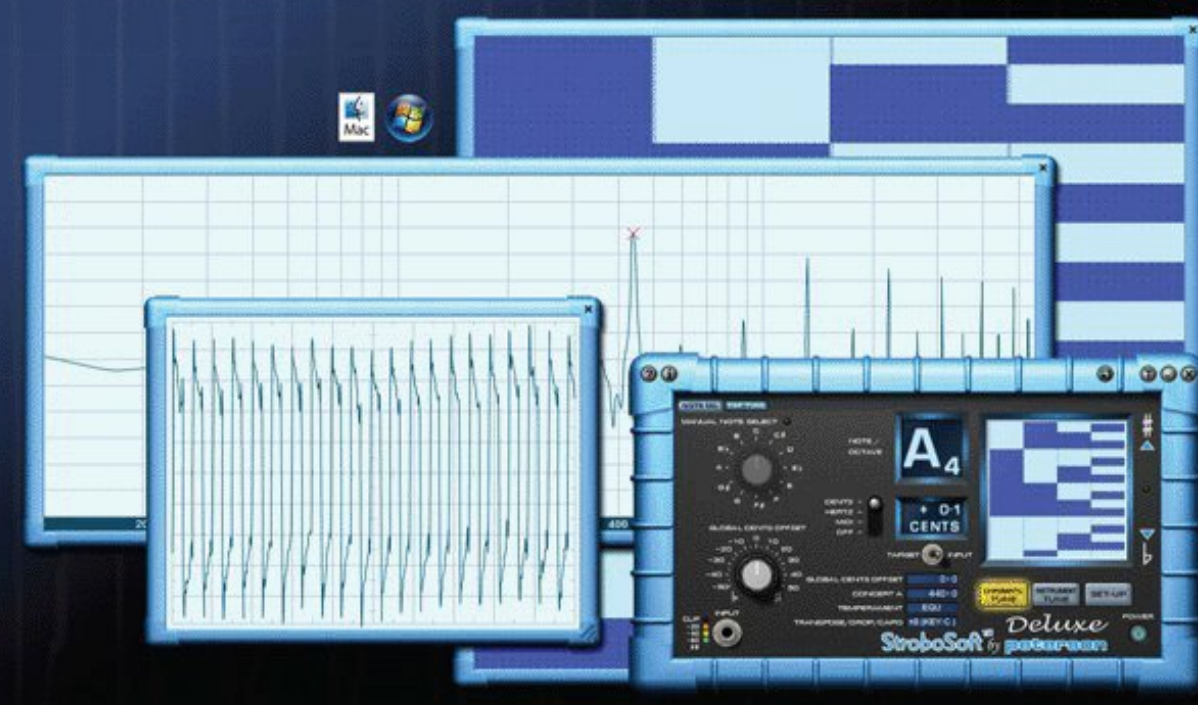

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The tracking room at Michael Wagener's WireWorld Studio.

STUDIO PREPARATION

What You Should Know Before You Go

BY ELIANNE HALBERSBERG

What makes a hit record?

It is a perennial question, but it has also become one that must be asked on a playing field now leveled by downloads, ringtones and social networking. "To make it these days, it's so competitive and so hard and there's little insight into what it takes to get there," says producer Johnny K. Step one, of course, is getting your music heard, and that means recording. But before you invest in studio time and a producer, you need to be prepared.

For some "sound" advice, we turned to a diverse panel of experts: Michael Wagener, *the* heavy metal producer of the 1980s (and who is still in demand for recording sessions and workshops); Jason Burleson, guitar, banjo and mandolin player in the award-winning bluegrass group Blue Highway; Johnny K, producer and guitarist, whose Groovemaster Studio is a recording home for top rock bands; John Leventhal, multi-instrumentalist and award-winning producer who has worked with artists such as Michelle Branch, Shawn Colvin and most notably his wife, Rosanne Cash; harmonica player Mickey Raphael, who has spent more than 35 years sharing stage and studio with master craftsman Willie Nelson and also "unproduced" the *Naked Willie* album; and Bruce Kulick, best known as a 12-year member of Kiss during a pivotal time in the band's career. Kulick has a wealth of studio, band and touring experience, and recently released his third solo album, *BK3*.

Practice

While it sounds elementary and should be a given, many bands don't commit to rehearsing. Time is money in the studio. If you don't know your stuff, you're wasting both for everyone involved.

"This is very important," says Kulick. "You want to be really tight. Rehearse. Play the music in front of people, even in rehearsals. I'm very strict about rehearsals. I don't want the band to seem uncomfortable about the songs. When I recently toured Australia, I had two new musicians and I was very comfortable with them. We had three and a half days of rehearsal and we were ready. At a certain point you're only going to be as good as you can be, and ▶▶▶

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STUDIO PREPARATION
What You Should Know Before You Go

Michael Wagener sharing his studio expertise with members of the Black Mollys.

in a week of rehearsals, sometimes day four is better than day seven. Why? Who knows. Things can change, both live and in the studio, and practice is very important."

"Everybody should be in the pocket," adds Wagener. "If one guy plays on his own terms, it won't work. Another thing: There's a little word called *practice*, which we don't hear about much anymore. If the musicians groove together and hear each other, things will fall into place."

Practice shouldn't stop after your tracks have been cut or at the end of a recording day. As Johnny K remarks, overtime pays off. "In the case of Staind, Mike [Mushok] would go home, come back and blow my mind," he says. "He absorbs and puts thought into things, and it's always worth the wait. Dan Donegan of Disturbed records all his parts, demos them and comes in rehearsed and ready to go. He has his own Pro Tools rig set up in the lounge of the studio. He's listening to his performance, his recordings. Mike Wengren is there with his V-Drums and they work together. It's pretty amazing. C.J. Pierce from Drowning Pool would work all day in the studio, then record his parts and come in the next day. Gabriel Garcia of Black Tide is into GarageBand and evaluates his work before coming in. After recording for eight hours, you'd think his fingers would be sore, but he goes into the lounge, plugs in and keeps playing while I record the other band members."

Choose Your Team Wisely

To save money, you may be tempted to produce and mix the project yourself. Affordable software makes it possible for anyone to saturate the internet with their music directly from their home studio. Don't do this!

"Nowadays, kids call themselves producers, and all they do is put beats together—in other words, steal other people's songs!" says Wagener. "The ability for a guitar player to record himself and be the engineer is not a good thing. You can get good tone, but engineering is a left-brain situation and playing guitar is a right-brain situation. The more left brain you have going on, the more it takes away from the right brain. Guitarists should just think about playing and singing, and the engineer can take care of the technical side. Doing it yourself is not a good idea. A good engineer can be very helpful."

"With Pro Tools, you can move three seconds of music one millisecond forward, do endless editing and get it just the way you want," says Burleson. "But with a good engineer, you don't have to think about the technical stuff. Just immerse yourself in the music you're cutting."

How do you find the right person for the engineering job? "When somebody is recommended, that means something," says Kulick. "No matter where you are, someone in your city or state has a reputation for getting the sounds." Do your homework, check references, reputations. Once you find someone, remember that you're paying for their knowledge and expertise, so listen carefully and keep an open mind. That said, don't hire on name alone. "The wrong producer can take a project in a direction that isn't you," says Kulick. "There are so many variables in the way that something is created, molded and shaped in production. It takes a visionary person to make it special. Listen to someone's work. If you like a couple of albums they produced, or they like you and they give you

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a CD to listen to, whether it's an entire album or 10 tracks by different artists, you will get a sense of their sound. Something should click in you instinctively that says that this person can do something for you."

Be forewarned: quality isn't cheap, but it will benefit the outcome. "Recording in a professional studio is very expensive," says Kulick. "However, I believe that the end result of using a real studio, if you have a gifted engineer and a visionary producer, will give you amazing results, if you have the budget. Not all studios will break the bank, but make sure you know whether it's a day rate or an hour-by-hour rate, so that you have everything lined up.

"If budget is a problem, you might consider having them just do the two or three key tracks of your record, the tracks that can make a difference between the entire album being popular or not," he says. "We live in a singles age, anyway, so those two or three key tracks matter. Musicians always talk about whether they've had a positive or negative experience with someone, or why someone made a project special. That's the reputation again. Also,

Bruce Kulick at Stagg Studios recording *BK3*.

when you hire someone with that good reputation, they know how to bring in a good team to make things great. This is a very competitive business, so those things are important."

On Time and in Time

Whether you're a platinum-selling artist or a first-time client, a producer will expect you to conduct yourself professionally. Some ▶▶▶

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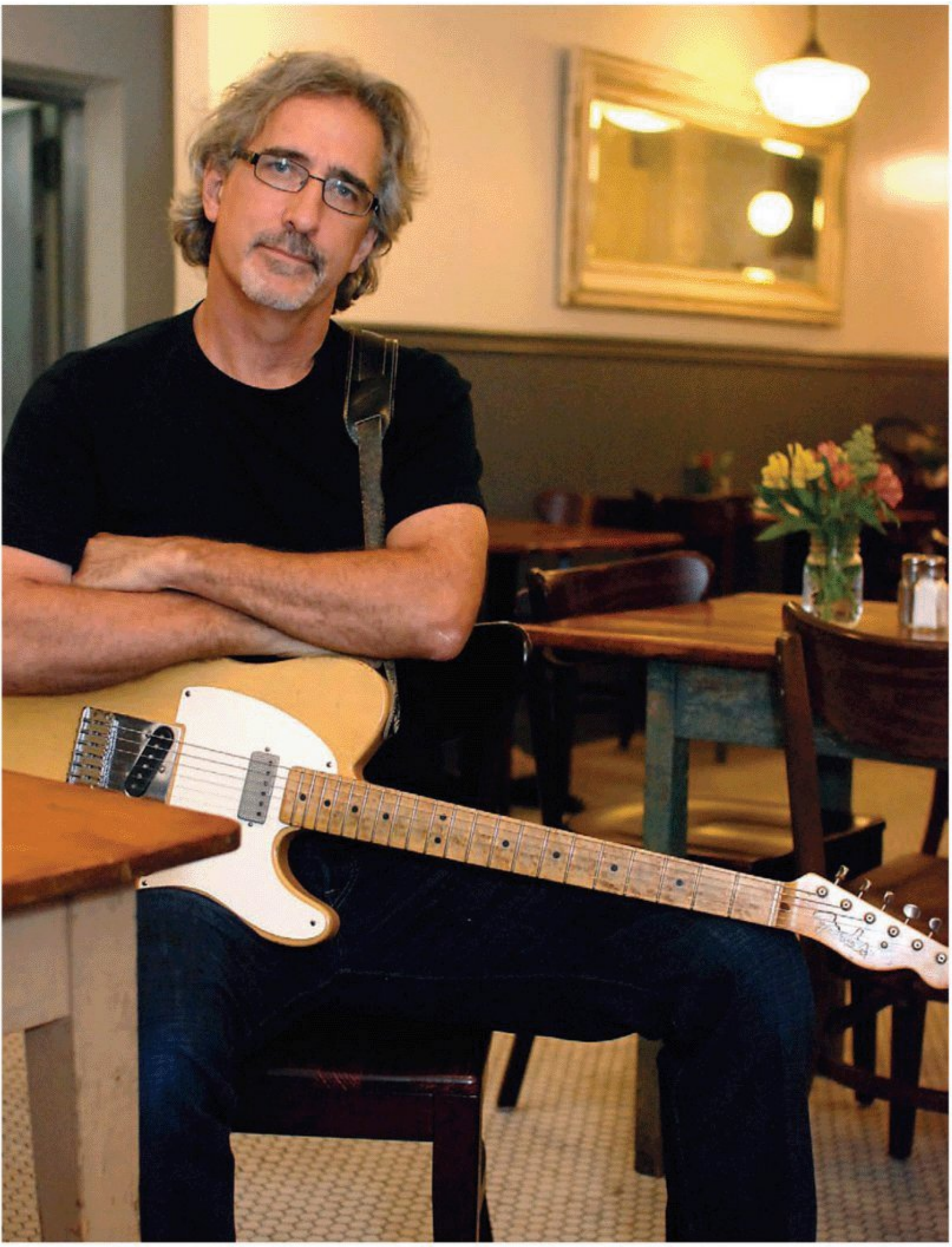
STUDIO PREPARATION
What You Should Know Before You Go



John Leventhal. Photo by Gabi Porterfield.

basic studio etiquette: punctuality, sobriety, courtesy, having functioning gear and knowing your material.

"The instrument should be in top shape," says Wagener. "There is nothing worse than getting in the zone and your instrument craps out on you or goes out of tune. You've got to maintain your instrument very well or you will kill the groove if you have to deal with those things while tracking. It's a nuisance. Your instrument should be set up perfectly for playing. If you have to stop and tune every two seconds, it stops the flow of creativity. Of course, I'm still a big believer in pre-production. We go in, work on the songs, and when we're in the studio everyone knows what they should be playing."

"The producer has to be a leader in a strict yet kind way," says Kulick. "He wants the band to be on time, for you to have your strings, be in tune, have your tools. Have more than enough tools. Bring extra drumheads and an extra snare. There's no reason not to be very, very prepared, because in the studio everything is under a magnifying glass. The producer expects you to be well supplied and prepared with simple things that you might not even think of, like printing out neat copies of your song lyrics. Bring everything you can and more. You might suddenly decide you want to try a 12-string on a song; it would be foolish not to bring your 12-string in case that happens. Amps too. You love that one Marshall, but if you need a simple sound to layer guitars, you don't want the other amp to have the same complex sound with its overdrive. Bring your Fender amp, your Orange, bring it all and let the producer paint a picture of what it's going to sound like. You can never be over-prepared."

If you're hiring session players, again, opt for the best. "A great drummer is imperative," says Kulick, "whether he's playing to a click or not. He is your basis for getting all the overdubs to feel great. When you look at the most revered bands—Led Zeppelin, The Who, Van Halen—the drummer is really special. Your bass player… it's nice to have a Paul McCartney, but that's not as critical as the drummer. I've worked with a lot of famous producers, and it's very, very hard when the drummer isn't talented. He's your most important weapon for a great-sounding track and having the day go smoothly. He's the foundation of the music. The first day in the studio is about the rhythm section. Everything else can be overdubbed and you can figure it out later."

Play Well with Others

When it's time to cut your parts, keep a few things in mind: 1. Now is not the time to unleash your inner EVH; 2. If you have involved other musicians in this project, let them be heard; 3. There's beauty in simplicity; 4. Silence speaks volumes.

"The guitar initially is a tool, a map to find a way into the song, and not always the primary tool," says Leventhal. "I am a guitar player, that's how I started, and I have some facility on the instrument, but I never plan to play more guitar or take more solos. My playing has economy to it in records I produce, and my records don't have a lot of solos. Guitar playing shouldn't be self-indulgent. It should feel like an organic part of the songs."

"When we're talking about doing a new record, we sit in a circle, pass the guitar back and forth and sing to see which songs might work with the band," says Burleson.

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Mickey Raphael in the studio with Willie Nelson.

"The song indicates its arrangement, tempo and which of the vocalists is best suited for it. Our saying is, 'The song is the boss.' It happens pretty quickly for us because there are no huge egos as far as who kicks it off. Everybody is open to let what happens happen and no one is offended if someone says, 'This song should be a mandolin kickoff, not a banjo.' We all know what to play behind the featured vocal or instrument. No one overrides the primary focus of the song. You have to listen and support each other, not drown each other out."

Raphael knows a thing or two about how to fit, when to play and when to step aside. "I weave the web around the pocket and thread it together," he says, "and if it gets too crazy, I don't have to play. If it's too far out there, I shut the fuck up and listen. That's something Willie taught me: It doesn't hurt to sit back and listen. You don't have to play all the time. When you're in the studio, or onstage, you've got to be able to listen and work with other guys. When you're a young player and still learning, you want to play everything you know as fast as you can. Again, it's like Willie says: Less is more. Genre to genre, you have to listen to what the song needs and what you can contribute. I'm concerned about playing one note with great tone rather than a solo with all the licks I know. You don't talk when someone else is talking. It's the same thing with music. When the singer is singing, stay out of the way of the lyrics. People want to hear what the singer and the other players have to say. If it's not your turn to play, watch the other guys and be gracious. It's a team effort."

"A lot of people are terrific players at home and in their bedrooms, but they can't work with a group, take direction or apply themselves to what it takes to fit into a collaborative effort, which is what a band is," says Kulick. "Everyone has their own approach. You learn how to fit in, and that's a key element. Some people are talented but have no social skills, or no understanding of when it's time to extend themselves and when it's time to sit back. Each situation has its own dynamics, and you have to understand those dynamics in order to make it work. That's been a key to keeping me successful and keeping me working."

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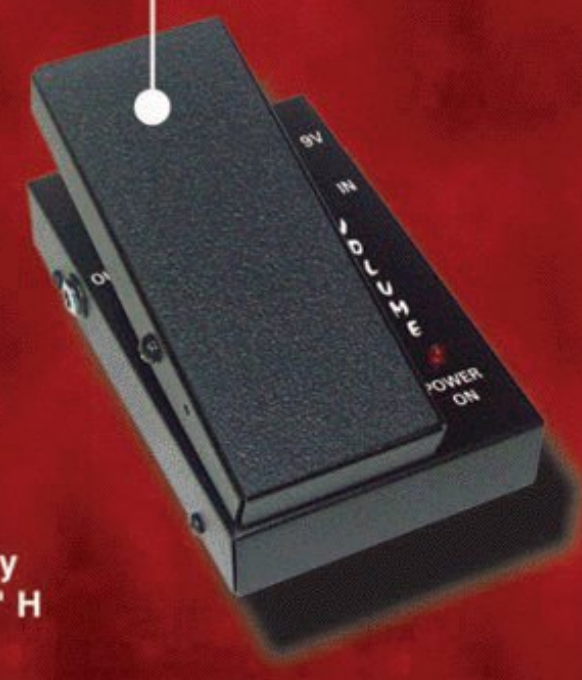

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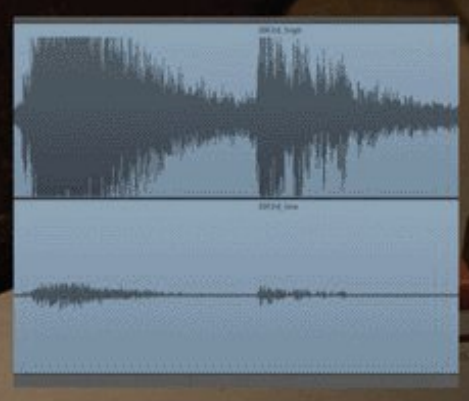

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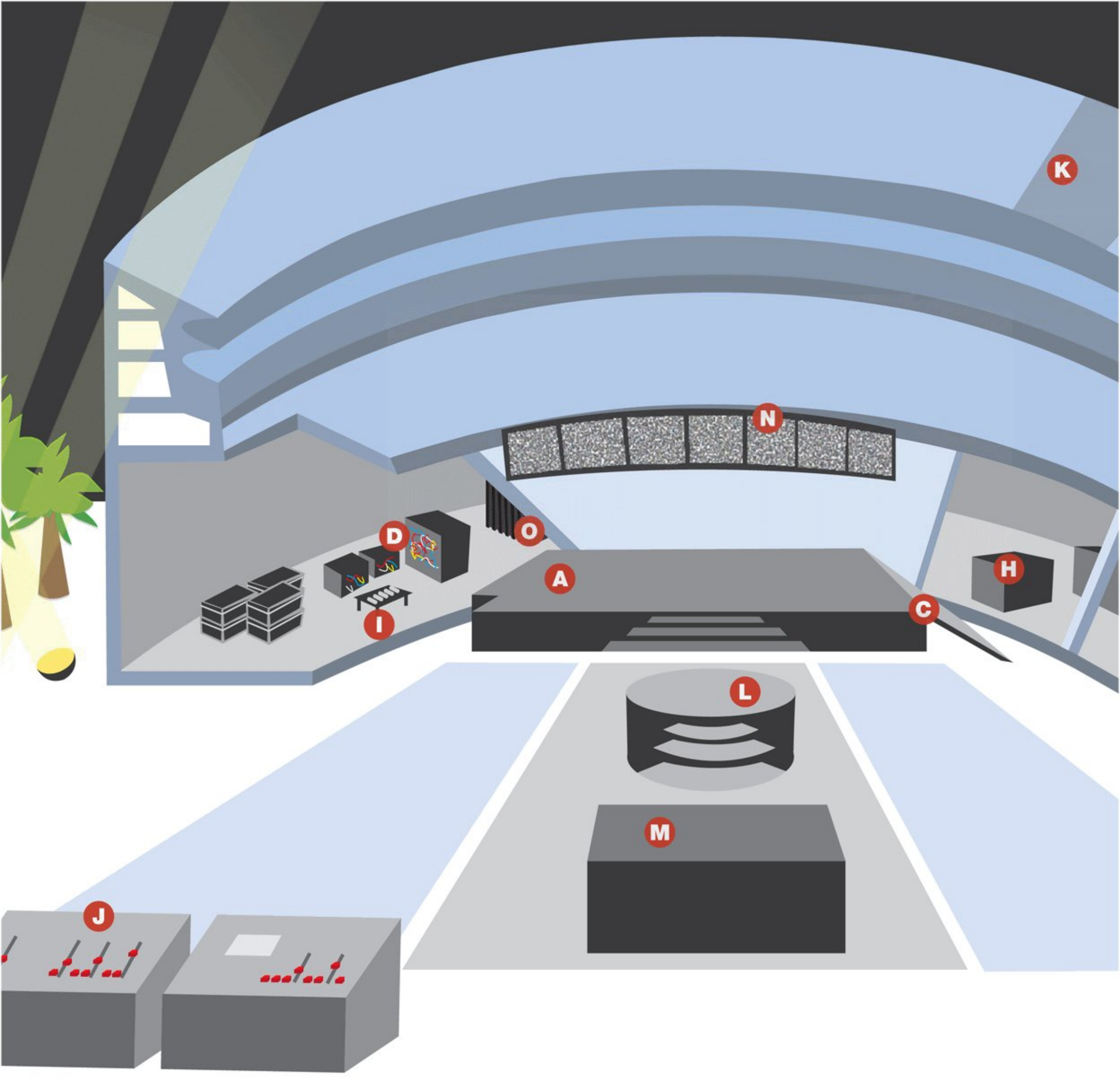

A. The **Stage** is wide enough to act as two stages (left and right) so that one side can be set up/struck while the other hosts a live performance.

B. Stage platforms on wheels allow bands to have individual rigs set up and ready to go. They are wheeled on stage and locked together for a performance, then unlocked and wheeled off afterwards. Each stage platform houses a mini snake that can route all the musician's signals to the boards via one connection.

C. This **ramp** is a high traffic area during the broadcast, with stage platforms full of backline gear and sets being wheeled on and off after each performance.

D. Splitsville is where transformer splits send audio signals from the stage platforms to 4 places: FOH, the monitor mixing station (not pictured), the mixing trucks outside the Staples Center, and the broadcast mixing board (as a backup). The signals for the mixing trucks are converted to digital and sent via fiber optic lines.

E. Two **audio mixing trucks** outside the Staples Center, operated by co-music mixers Eric Schilling and John Harris, are used to mix the audio for the performances. Both are equipped with identical Digidesign ICON boards so that presets for each channel of audio for each act can be dialed up immediately. The signals from these trucks is sent to the broadcast mixing board.

F. A **broadcast mixing board**, operated by Tom Holmes, combines lines from the music mix with other presentation elements like presenter mics, video playback, and audience hot spots into the broadcast's 5.1 surround sound mix. Broadcast audio supervisor Phil Ramone is stationed in this truck, too. The other half of this truck houses the broadcast's video team.

G. The **graphics team** is housed in this truck. Broadcast graphics include nominee and

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THE GEAR OF THE GRAMMYS

BY JOE COFFEY

Illustration by Meghan Molumby

Sure, those golden phonograph trophies are significant, but have you considered what it takes to make that gig happen? The Grammy Awards are broadcast live—and involve the biggest acts of the year. 16 took to the stage this year, bringing their own gear, live sound requirements, unique sets, dancers, techs, etc. Now imagine what it's like to make those stage changes, get the FOH and monitor boards switched up and ready without sound checks, do the same with audio boards dedicated for the broadcast, solve problems on the fly, keep A-list artists happy, *and* stay on time. The performances are all live, too—with minimal canned tracks/effects, as per the wishes of the Recording Academy (also known as the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences).

Premier Guitar had a chance to crawl around in the belly of the beast—the Staples Center, as it was configured for the 52nd Grammy Awards show—in order to report on the gear involved and the behind-the-scenes effort that makes Music's Biggest Night happen. Here's what we found…

The evening involved a handpicked crew of 38 audio engineers and technicians, 160 stagehands, 150 event technicians and 26 stage managers. It took 40 riggers 7 days to hang 130 tons of lighting, sound equipment and set pieces from the ceiling. 300 chain motors hoisted it all to 260 anchor points and 70 fall protection points. 3000 feet of trussing was involved. More than 450 mics were used, (80 were wireless). The 100,000-watt house sound system involved four Yamaha PM1D consoles, 94 speaker cabinets flown from the grid, with a cluster of 12 subs in the middle, 9 delay clusters to solve timing issues throughout the venue, and 14 fill speakers under the stage so that the celebs in the first few rows could hear a good mix.

winner names and titles, "Coming up next…" slates before commercials, final credits, etc.

H. The **playback booth** is where audio techs control the rare pre-recorded elements of a Grammy performance, such as string sections and hip hop samples. The Recording Academy takes great pride in the fact that very few canned elements are used these days. It's not unusual for large string sections to be mic'd and used live on stage for a single performance.

I. The **wireless station** is where signals from wireless mics and body packs for guitarists are received.

J. The **FOH** mixing boards, operated by Ron Reaves and Mikael Stewart, control the mix for the live audience.

K. This mic'd **hot spot** of audience activity is named as such because true fans, rather than industry executives, are sitting here reacting to the performances, which makes for better live audio during the broadcast. Many hot spot tickets are given away via radio station contests.

L. The **center platform** allows presenters and performers to have a presence in the middle of the audience. This year it had a removable top that concealed a hot tub inside it. Pink was lowered into it during her acrobatic performance of "Glitter in the Air."

M. The **main camera platform** was the central focal point for most presenters and performers, supporting broadcast cameras and prompter screens.

N. 14 **video screens** were used in conjunction with the evening's presentations and performances

O. The **last stop** booth is the last place an artist goes before walking up the stairs to go onstage. Inside this booth are refreshments, lounge chairs, make-up stations and color-corrected mirrors.

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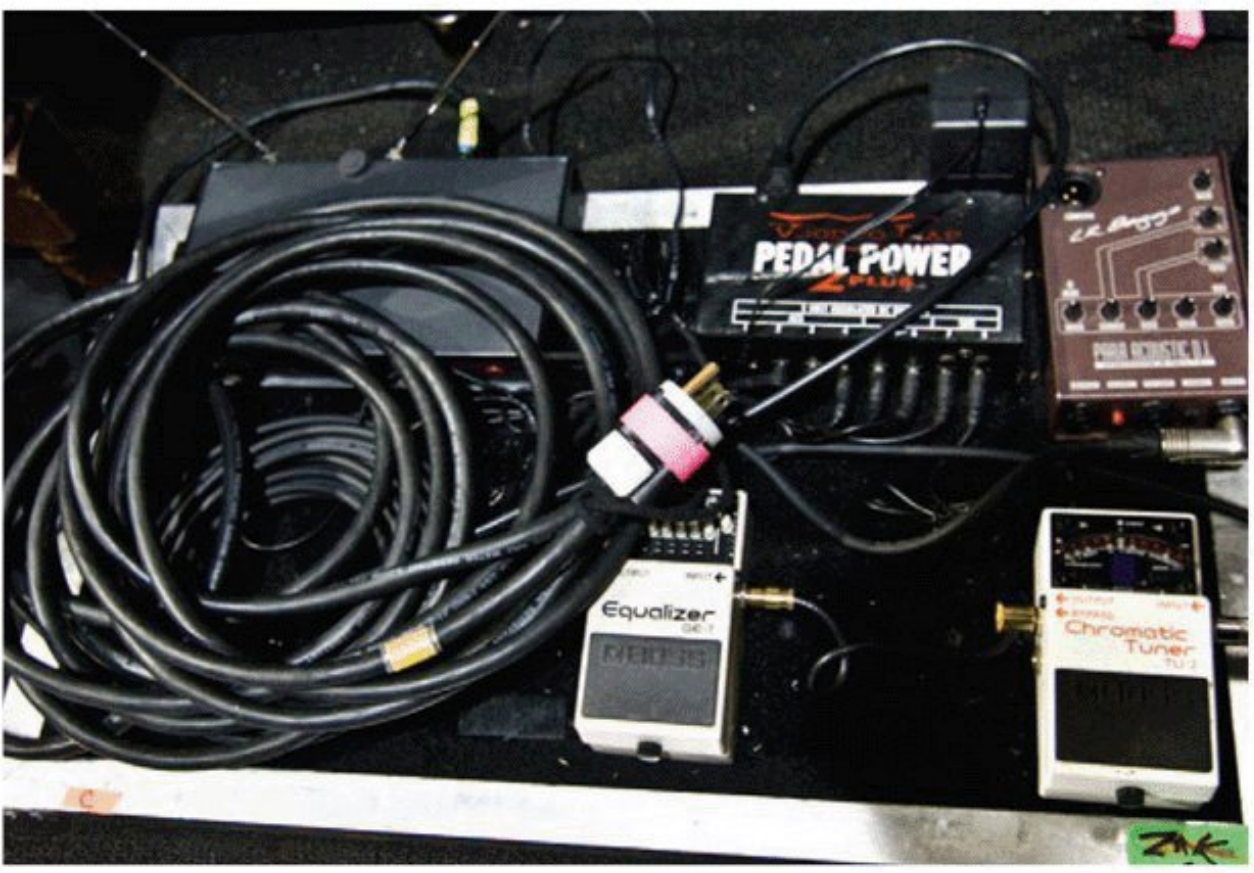
THE GEAR OF THE GRAMMYS™

Green Day and the cast of the musical *American Idiot* rehearse "21 Guns" as Mikael Stewart mixes all of the non-musical audio in the venue on a Yamaha PM1D console. The PM1D to his right, operated by Ron Reaves, handles the FOH mix for musical performances. The house sound system was provided by ATK AudioTek.



Zac Brown's Grammy pedalboard boasts a Sennheiser EW 372 G2 wireless, a Boss TU-2 tuner, a Boss GE-7 EQ, and an LR Baggs Para Acoustic DI. Brown also tours with an Avalon U5 DI (not pictured). Leon Russell joined Brown and his band during their medley of "America the Beautiful," "Dixie Lullaby," and "Chicken Fried." Brown played his Taylor NS72ce acoustic with Savarez 520-J high-tension nylon strings. He uses the GE-7 as a signal boost for solos.

Slash played through a Marshall Vintage Modern head during his Grammy performance with Jamie Foxx. (Settings: Reverb off, Master Volume 4, Presence 4, Bass 7, Middle 7, Treble 7, Mid Boost engaged, Preamp Volumes: Detail 6, Body 6) He was using the prototype for his new signature Les Paul (not pictured), which is modeled after a '59 LP and has his new Seymour Duncan signature pickups in it.

Dave Bellamy of Soundtronix stands in front of three racks of wireless systems for mics and guitar packs; there were actually four—an additional rack was brought in to accommodate the multiple vocalists who performed with Green Day. The baking tins are used to control the wireless signals of the units not in use.

Click here to see an extended photo gallery of the gear and the inner workings of the 52nd Grammy Awards show.

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Pete Townshend

On Guitar-Smashing Regrets, Stylistic Evolution, and Becoming a Gear Aficionado

BY BOB CIANCI

In the summer of 1965, this writer was an aspiring teenage drummer with more than a passing interest in the guitar. Tuning into the ABC television rock show *Shindig!* one evening, I witnessed The Who's American debut. They lip-synched their first UK hit, "I Can't Explain," as I sat transfixed by drummer Keith Moon, singer Roger Daltrey, bassist John Entwistle and particularly the tall, skinny guitarist with the prominent nose and the windmilling arm. His name, I later learned, was Pete. I have been hooked on The Who ever since.

I had belatedly developed a liking for The Beatles' music, as well as that of The Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds, Them, and The Kinks, but The Who was different. Their music, their attitude and their take-no-prisoners stance was totally aggressive, and just a bit out of control, and it spoke to my teenage angst and struck a chord that rings true to this day. I even managed to get my hands on a big piece of the mid-'60s Tele (see cover) Townshend demolished at Convention Hall in Asbury Park, NJ, on August 12, 1967. Jim McGlynn, who played guitar in a local band and wrote for the *Newark Evening News*, interviewed Townshend after the show. I guess Townshend was feeling pretty magnanimous that night because he gave it to him. A few months later, I bought it from Jim for $10! It's still hanging on my wall today. ▶▶▶

Photo: © Trinifold Management

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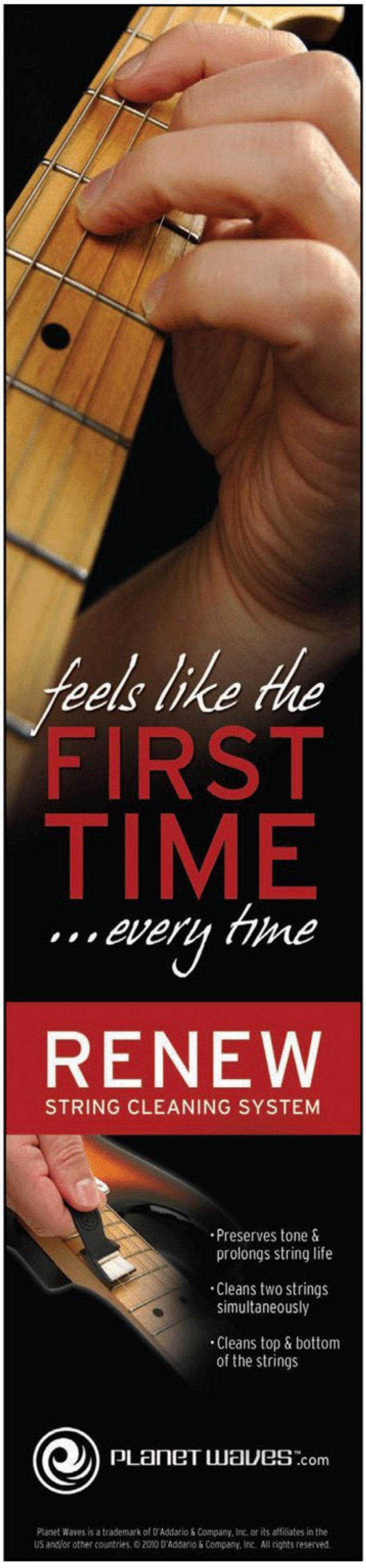

Pete Townshend

Forty-five years later, I'm still saying, "I told you so," to my oldest friend (to whom I proclaimed The Who would become a rock music institution). He and I have seen them in concert many times over the years. Through all the triumphs and failures, the public squabbles, the aggression and violent equipment destruction, the rock-star excess, the untimely passing of Moon and Entwistle, and the unspeakable tragedy of 11 fans trampled to death in Cincinnati, it has always been the music of Pete Townshend and The Who that spoke truest to me.

Townshend has always been The Who's chief spokesman. His interviews are the stuff of legend: intelligent, thoughtful, interesting, eloquent, insightful, sometimes brutally honest—occasionally playful, self-mocking and petulant—but always fascinating. Pete prefers doing interviews by email these days, which ruled out any spontaneous questions or conversation that might have occurred, but I trust the reader will understand. During the course of this exchange, Pete communicated at length about his preference for the Stratocaster and Fender amps, his obvious affection for acoustic and vintage instruments from his collection, hearing loss, and more. You may find some of his remarks concerning The Who, guitar smashing, and Marshall amps a bit surprising. Here then, is the Pete Townshend *Premier Guitar* interview. It was a long time in the making. I hope you agree the results were worth the wait.

For years now, your choice of electric guitar onstage has been the Eric Clapton Stratocaster. Why that guitar in particular after years using Gibson SGs and Les Pauls, as well as other models?

A bit of history: The Who worked fairly solidly from 1963 through to 1982, when I felt I had had enough. Over the entirety of those years, I had regarded my stage guitars as tools rather than instruments. I never tried to play *eloquently*, I didn't practice much and I didn't work very hard on my sound. The Who was a band devoted to a single function, which was to reflect our audience, and for a lot of the time we had no idea how we did that. I felt it had more to do with my songs and the image of the band than our musicianship. I would never have been a Who fan.

I started in late 1962 with a simple, single-pickup Harmony electric; I think it was called a Stratotone. When Roger quit his job as lead guitarist and became the singer, he passed me his Epiphone with P-90s. To be honest, although I realize now it was a fine little guitar, I wasn't happy until I got my first Rickenbacker in 1964. I soon got myself a top model 12-string Rick, too. It's interesting to think that the Marshall sound I helped Jim and his guys develop was built around the very low output and thin, surfy sound of the Rick. The sound I wanted was Steve Cropper, but very loud. The early Marshall with a Rick gave me that. The semi-acoustic body and a speaker stack feeding right into the guitar was what allowed me to refine tuneful feedback.

Before the band was making money—we are still in early 1964 in this story—I broke my 6-string Rick on stage engaging in art-school-inspired performance art. Roger said he could have fixed that first broken Rick, but the word spread so fast about how crazy I was that it wasn't long before the 12-string and about four other Ricks followed before I started to look for something stronger. During that time the Who were touring Britain and Europe, and guitars were expensive. My Rick 12, for example, cost £385, that's equivalent to £5,925 today. With the dollar at 2.4 back at that time, my Rick 12 cost me $14,220. It makes me a little angry when people question my artistic integrity in what I decided to do on stage. I paid the price.

I tried everything that I could pick up at less than the price of a house. There are pictures of me with a Gibson 335, Strats, Teles, Jazzmasters and Danelectros. What I was looking for was not a good-sounding guitar but one that was strong. And so I used quite a lot of Fenders. The necks never broke when I was doing my destruction routine, and gluing the bodies back together and rewiring helped me one step closer to becoming a luthier.

When Jimi was in London, it just so happened I was using a Strat, and he modeled his entire amplifier rig, apart from a couple of special fuzz boxes, according to my advice. So for a while our sound was similar. But no one could approach what he did with that rig, and I decided to concentrate much more on chordal work, trying to give a beat backbone to Moon's flailing and undisciplined drumming. Pretty soon, by accident, I discovered the Gibson SG with P-90s, and because I was using a mix of Sound City (later Hiwatt) and Marshall amplifier stacks, I landed the *Live at Leeds* sound that stayed with me almost all the way on from there—at least onstage. Because SGs are fairly light, I broke quite a few of them over my hipbone, as well as in our finale, so occasionally I used Strats for their sheer strength.

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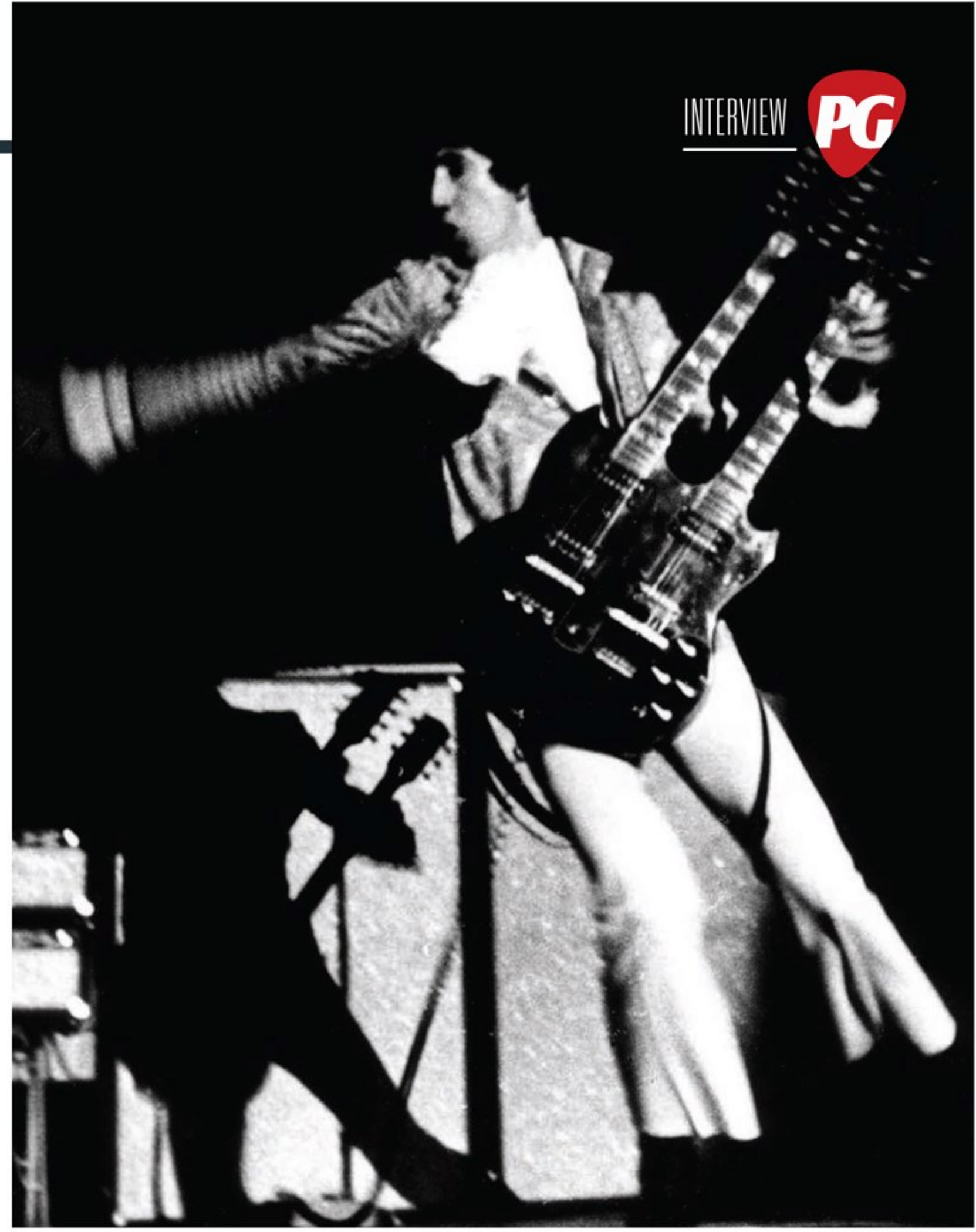

Ruffled Ruffian: Townshend winds up with a Gibson doubleneck circa 1966. Photo: © Trinifold Management

My present guitar tech, Alan Rogan, came to me sometime in the very early '70s I think, and after a while I developed the Les Paul Special with a middle humbucker set for feedback. Those guitars were heavy. But by that time my stage work involved less jumping and a little more punk posing. I was still using that guitar on The Who's last tour in 1982. Gibson did a signature Pete Townshend model Les Paul, which works well, though it's still a heavy guitar. The middle pickup is meant to be set close to the strings to allow instant feedback. It is on a separate on-off switch to allow machine-gun staccato effects. The other two small humbuckers are wired in the conventional Gibson manner but with a phase switch. In the studio I could get almost any sound I wanted with that guitar.

In 1989 when I briefly gathered the band to do a 25th anniversary tour, I played mainly acoustic onstage. But here and there I picked up a Strat to rock out. By that time I had spent nearly seven years off the road. I had practiced a lot, maybe more piano than guitar, but I had a terrific studio and really tried to learn to play better. The Gibson SG still has a place in my arsenal of sounds, but when I found the Eric Clapton Strat I got the best of two worlds: a clean Fender sound when I wanted it, and with the built-in power booster, the ability to make the sound dirty for slab-drive chord work. I have often tried SGs again, and I still love them and use them for recording, but I love the Strat-style whammy bar.

I built my first home studio in 1963, and again, somehow this relegated the guitar as a musical instrument to a different role. I just wanted something that suited the song I might be working on. I kept a basic collection of guitars for my home studio right through until *Who's Next*, when I made my first spending spree at Manny's in 1971. On that visit, I bought my first Martin D-45, a Gibson mandolin, a couple of Martin ukes and a tiple, a pedal steel, a Guild Merle Travis, and a beautiful Guild 12-string. I have some of these instruments still. Prior to that, for my home demos, I had a Harmony 12-string (very basic, but it sounded great, you can hear it on the *Tommy* recording), a Danelectro bass, an old-school cello I sometimes used as string bass and whatever electric guitar I was carrying to and from gigs at the time.

From 1971, everything changed. Alan Rogan helped me track down a lot of cool guitars. Joe Walsh gave me a Gretsch and a Fender Bassman combo with an Edwards pedal (to get the Neil Young sound). He also gave me a Flying V (that I am sad to say I sold to help buy my first big boat—he's never quite forgiven me). I bought two or three D'Angelicos, and started to really appreciate what a fine guitar really was. The acoustic solo in the middle of "Who Are You" is played on my D'Angelico New Yorker (also sold to help buy a boat!) and you can hear that I am playing *eloquently* at last…

I met Pat Martino in 1993 while I was in New York working on the musical *Tommy*. He was still fighting his way back from his brain damage, and I don't think he was too impressed with me as a guitar player. He was courteous, but it was quite clear which of us was the fan. I'm nuts about his work, early and late, pre and post brain operations. But he brought me his Paul Reed Smith (which I felt was far too lightweight, by the way) and it had a built-in piezo pickup. This was the first [electric with a built-in piezo] I'd seen, and when I got home Alan tracked down a couple and we started to experiment.

What is useful to me onstage is that I get a sizzling string sound from the piezo, to give color and detail to the sustain sound I use these days for solos. There are some added benefits. One of my techniques is banging the bridge and back pickup with the palm and wrist, and I do this quickly to create a kind of thunderous explosive sound—like a heavy machine gun. The piezo plays a big part in this sound, because it relays the sound of the body of the guitar being thumped. Fishman has gone a long way to make these piezo systems extremely silky sounding.

You played a lot of acoustic guitar on the 1989 reunion tour. Are you playing any acoustic live, and if so, what do you favor these days? ▶▶▶

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Roger Daltrey, Zak Starkey and Townshend playing a medley of classics at the Super Bowl XLIV halftime show. Photo: Jeff Kravitz/Getty Images

I use a very special Gibson J-200 with a Fishman system, the one that combines a piezo with a little microphone inside the guitar. It won't go loud—it feeds back—but it gives me the closest sound to real acoustic that I've ever had onstage. We just played the Super Bowl halftime and I started with "Pinball Wizard" on one of those J-200s.

Away from the concert stage, can you tell me what instruments you prefer these days for recording or playing at home?

I have about 40 guitars in my studio, but I still tend to use a small number at any given time. My latest rave is an old J-200 with a Tune-o-matic bridge. It doesn't sound as good acoustically as the models with the wooden bridge, but it is very easy to record. This is the model I used on *Tommy, Who's Next, Rough Mix*, and *Empty Glass*. It's also the model Keith Richards used on the Stones' acoustic tracks like "Wild Horses." Glyn Johns knew how to make it sound perfect with a Neumann mic at least two feet away from the soundhole.

For electric, I use one of my stage Strats, or an old Tele or SG. Around the house, I have quite a few Collings models. They are all absolutely wonderful. I'm a big fan. I've got some nice old things as well, and some old amplifiers. Alan Rogan will often lead me to really nice instruments. I play a lot of mandolin around the house. I still have my '71 Gibson, and a recent Collings. They are both exquisite. I like composing on the mandolin, because it's tuned like the fiddle so it helps me understand classical and country fiddle fingerings.

Although you're not really known as a guitar collector, what are some of your favorite pieces in the collection?

A Dobro lap steel I bought at my local music shop. It must be about 1928. It looks like a frying pan. I've got a perfect Bacon and Day tenor banjo with a built-in mute I bought in New York a few years ago. There's a 1956 Epiphone Emperor that sounds like John Lee Hooker has traded souls with Carl Perkins and come back from the dead. I've got an Esquire string bender by Parsons-White, the real deal. I've still got the orange Chet Atkins Joe Walsh gave me back in the early '70s. My favorite guitar of all happens to be English. It's one of the first small-body Ariels by Fylde. I have three now, all superb, set up in different tunings.

Was there ever a time over the years when you said to yourself, "I wish I hadn't smashed that (fill in the brand name and model) guitar?

Once. Just once. It was probably around 1968. We were around Detroit about to play at the Grande Ballroom. I had no guitar. I went to the local pawnshops and bought two Strats. One was recent, the other was much older, probably from the first year of manufacture. They were not expensive. The dealer had no idea what he had. On stage, I started with the older of the two guitars. It was almost certainly a guitar that belonged to Buddy Holly. I sounded like Buddy Holly. I felt like Buddy Holly. The sound was superb, off the map, bell-like, silky, just sublime. When the time came to smash the guitar, I switched it for the newer one, and a boy at the front of the stage protested. "No," he shouted. "Smash the good one, not some fake." So I switched back, and to my shame smashed the guitar over his hands. I still wait for him to sue me. He would have a perfect right, but I was pretty angry with him. However, this entire guitar-smashing thing is my fault, my thing, my idea, my artistic statement, my absurdity. I have no doubt that guitar is sitting in someone's home now, and probably plays okay. I hope the same can be said for that poor guy's hands. So my regret and shame on this occasion is doubled.

Your amp of choice lately has been the Fender Vibro-King, after years using Marshalls, Hiwatts and others. With so many choices out there today, why Fender?

Listen, let him sue me, but I know that the first Marshall amp was almost a dead copy of the Fender Bassman head, with some minor changes to boost the level—minor changes that I insisted be major. The Vibro-King sounds more like an early Marshall amp than a new Marshall amp. They are great amps, but they require quite a bit of maintenance, tube biasing, etc. I mix 10" and 12" speakers in two cabs. Fender is very good to me: they are great with charity requests and give me good deals on my equipment.

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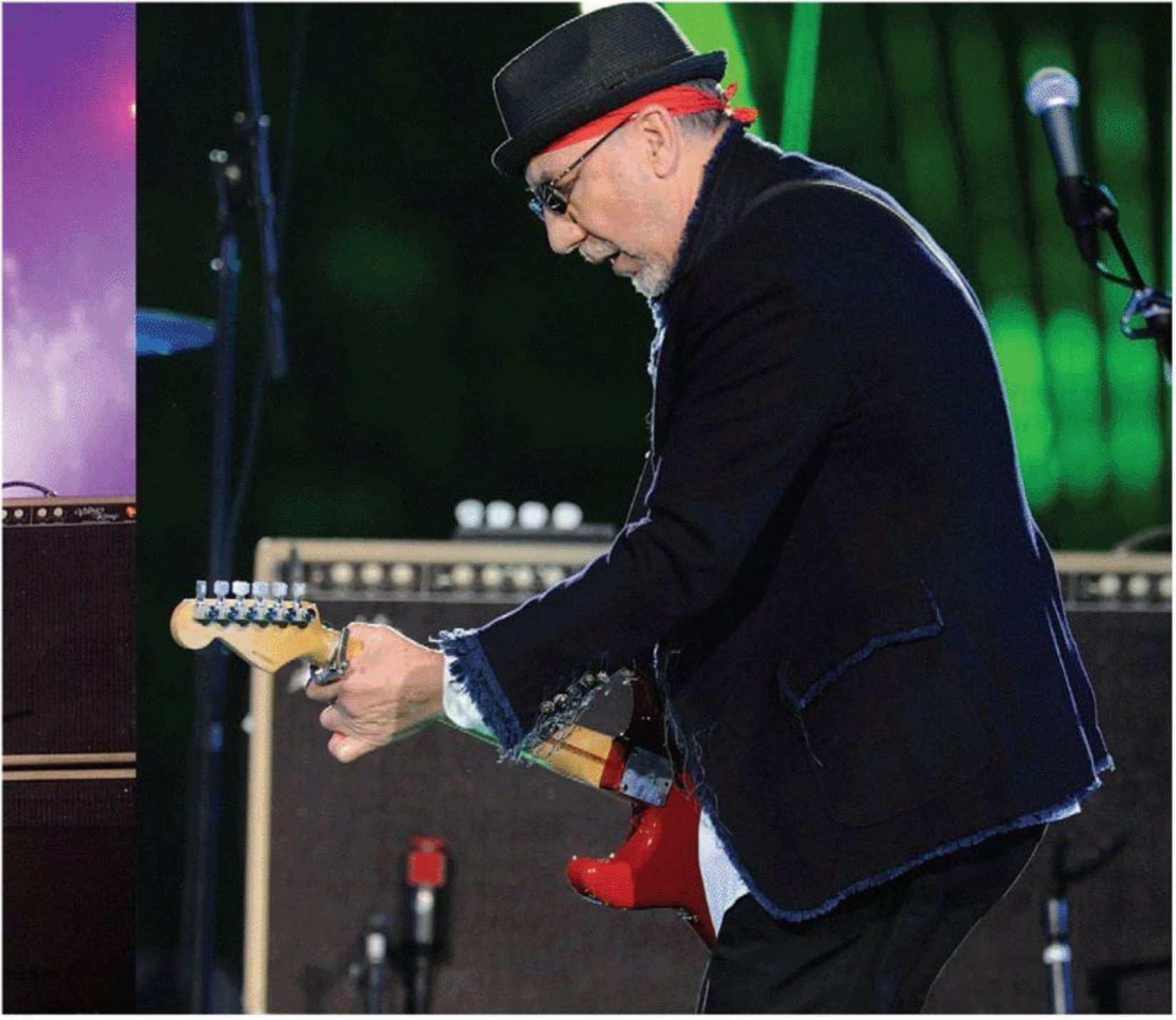

Townshend at the Super Bowl with his modified Fender Eric Clapton Strat and a wall of Fender Vibro-Kings.
Photo: Jeff Kravitz/Getty Images

Also, before I set eyes on a Rickenbacker—still a beautiful sight, I think—I had wanted a Fender Strat. I still believe it to be the most beautifully designed guitar of the modern era. The same can be said for the '60s amplifiers. They look so beautiful. Marshalls look like something from *The Munsters*. That's why I put the Union Jack Flag on the speakers. Before I had a Marshall, I had a Bassman and a Fender Pro split-wired. That is the sound I loved. Using two amps was my first trick. Getting Jim Marshall to make them louder was my second.

What effects are you using onstage now, and how are they integrated into your rig?

I have a T-Rex delay I use for color, a Boss OD-1 for sustain and distortion and a Demeter compressor. They are in a box [pedalboard] built by Pete Cornish.

After years as a rocker with strong blues and R&B influences, I have read that you are becoming proficient as a jazz guitarist. Is that true, and how do those influences inform your playing and writing these days?

I will never be proficient as a jazz guitarist. But I was listening to Wes Montgomery before I heard Steve Cropper. I find that jazz often involves chords with too many notes for the kind of music I write. However, the great innovators often use very few notes in their solos:

> This entire guitar-smashing thing is my fault, my thing, my idea, my artistic statement, my absurdity.

Miles, Wes and Coltrane. I'm still learning all the time. That's the joy of the guitar. There are so many great players and so many wonderfully innovative (and fast!) younger guys coming up.

Exactly who were the guitarists who influenced you as a youth?

Wes, Kenny Burrell (in his work with Jimmy Smith), Jim Hall (with Jimmy Giuffre), Buddy Guy, Leadbelly, Lightnin' Hopkins, Snooks Eaglin, Big Bill Broonzy, Hubert Sumlin (with Howlin' Wolf), Albert King, Steve Cropper, Don Everly, Bruce Welch (with The Shadows), Eddie Cochran, James Burton (with Ricky Nelson). Among my contemporaries, it was Dave Davies, Jimi Hendrix and Neil Young. At art school I met Bert Jansch, and realized folk guys used tricks (tunings)!

Are there any young guitarists coming up these days you find appealing or influential? ▶▶▶

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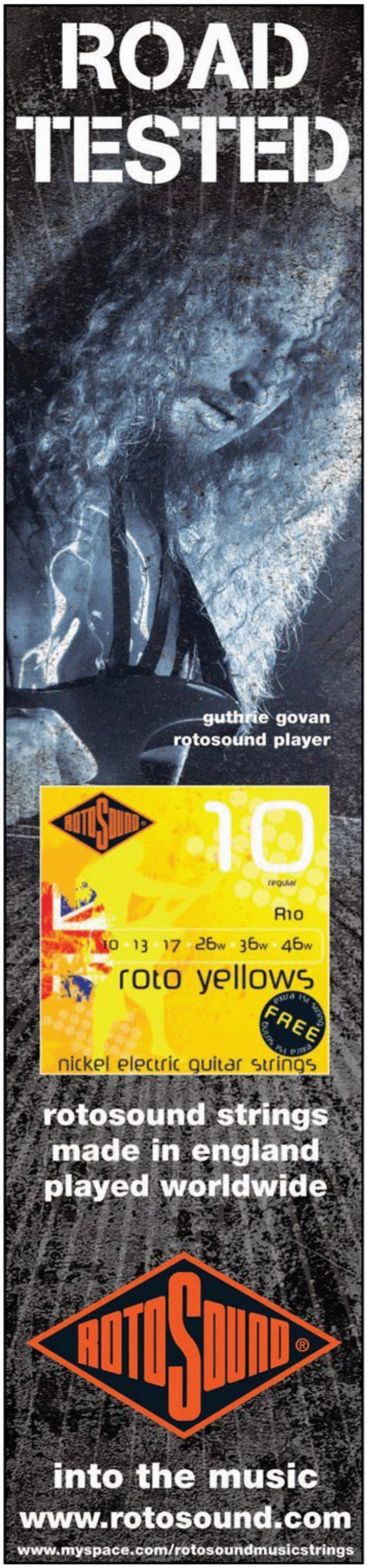

Pete Townshend

There are so many. Literally hundreds. The guitar is now available to everyone. If you have the aptitude, the chances are you start developing it really young. I know and counsel guitar players in their teens who can shred so fast they lose consciousness.

This brings us to the subject of hearing loss. You and I are both longtime working musicians who suffer from this problem. Mine is pretty severe, not only as a result of gigging for over 40 years, but as a result of genetic factors. What is the state of your hearing right now? Do you wear hearing aids, and assuming you use in-ears onstage, how are you protecting your hearing?

I don't use in-ears on stage. Not yet. I have just been introduced to a new microprocessor-controlled system with three transducers in each ear. They sound amazing. But the Chinese might hack into my gig…

I have started wearing hearing aids in the past months. The new ones are incredible. Tiny. The only way to protect my hearing would be to stop playing music. I get the most problems from long periods of studio work, which is how I compose. So I am nervous about the future right now.

You've been heavily involved in the recording process for decades. Has the art of recording changed for the better or worse in that time, and how are you using today's technology?

I mix old and new. I have pro analogue tape machines running alongside a computer running Digital Performer or Ableton Live. Things have got better. The emergence of digital was tricky. The sound was poor at first. I was lucky because I used Synclavier as my digital medium. That was sampling at 100KHz in mono and 50KHz in stereo back in 1984, with fabulous integrity. Now a laptop can deliver that if you wish.

You've always been a proponent of the internet, and have used it to your benefit for many years. When you conceptualized *Psychoderelict*, were you at all aware that you might have been predicting the rise of the internet with the album's theme of a "grid?"

I predicted the internet back in 1971 with *Lifehouse*. I can't take all the credit—I was taught at art school in 1961 that computers would change the way artists worked and communicated, and the way society functioned.

I have read you are writing material for a new Who album tentatively titled *Floss*. Can you give us some information about it? Will it be a return to a guitar-based sound again? What is the theme and when will it be released?

Floss is not a new Who album. It is a musical play. Some of the music might work for Roger and me; I am still working on it. I reckon I have another year to go writing.

What was it like to tour right after John Entwistle's death? That must have been extremely hard on you and Roger.

It was hard, but we had no option.

Do you plan on touring with The Who again at any time in the future, and if so, when?

There are no plans to tour at the moment.

After almost 47 years with The Who, are there any regrets? Would you change anything if you could? Do you still get a rush, a thrill, performing live with the band?

I've never gotten a rush or thrill from performing. I'm good at it, and I find it easy and natural. No regrets. I fell into this business, the family business, out of art school. It's given me the chance to combine popular music (which is so natural for me) with ambitious creativity, so I've been really lucky. I've had great support, too, from The Who band and managers over the years. Lots of crazy ideas.

Did you ever, in your wildest dreams, think The Who would last as long as it has, and are you satisfied with your musical legacy and the body of work you have created?

The gap from 1982 to 2006 in recording is a great shame. I made some good solo records, but the break was necessary, I think. I'm satisfied so far. I hope there is more to come.

What words of wisdom or advice would you like to pass on to *PG* readers as a guitarist?

The guitar is such a great friend, easy to carry from room to room, from house to house. If you play guitar, you are already blessed.

thewho.com
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[*The author would like to thank Pete's personal assistant, Nicola Joss, for her help and diligence in arranging and coordinating this interview.*]

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Pete's Gearbox

Alan Rogan has been Pete's tech since the early '70s. As he puts it, his job in The Who camp is, "just turn up and see what happens today, because it will be different tomorrow! I know this after 35 years! I've been really lucky to work with lots of great guitar players, but Pete has been, and still is, the most interesting. He never stops… definitely a guy who's thinking about now, not what he's done in the past."

Guitars: Fender Eric Clapton Stratocaster modified by Gordon Wells of Knight Guitars with a Fishman Acoustic bridge pickup and an EMG preamp (half the signal goes to a Demeter DI box, and Pete can then blend electric and acoustic sounds at will). Gibson J-200 acoustic equipped with Fishman Ellipse pickups.

Amps: Four Fender Vibro-Kings with a 2x12 extension cabinet for each. Pete normally uses one Vibro-King and cabinet for most songs, with the volume set on 3–3.5, but he can add the second at will. The third and fourth are there strictly as spares. Because of his hearing issues, his signal is fed through the monitor system, and the amps are faced away from him onstage. At the Super Bowl, Rogan mic'd a third Vibro-king setup and faced it backward.

Effects: Pedalboard designed and built by Pete Cornish, and includes a Demeter compressor, an older model Boss OD-1 and a T-Rex delay.

Mics and Monitors: Shure KSM313 ribbon mic for amps. Shure Beta 58A for vocals. Shure PSM 900 in-ear monitors.

Strings: Ernie Ball (.011–.052) on electrics. D'Addario EXP 19s (.012–.056) on acoustics.

Straps: Ernie Ball guitar straps

Picks: Heavy (no specific brand)

Keith Moon, Townshend and a Paul pummeling a mighty crescendo circa 1972. Photo: © Trinifold Management

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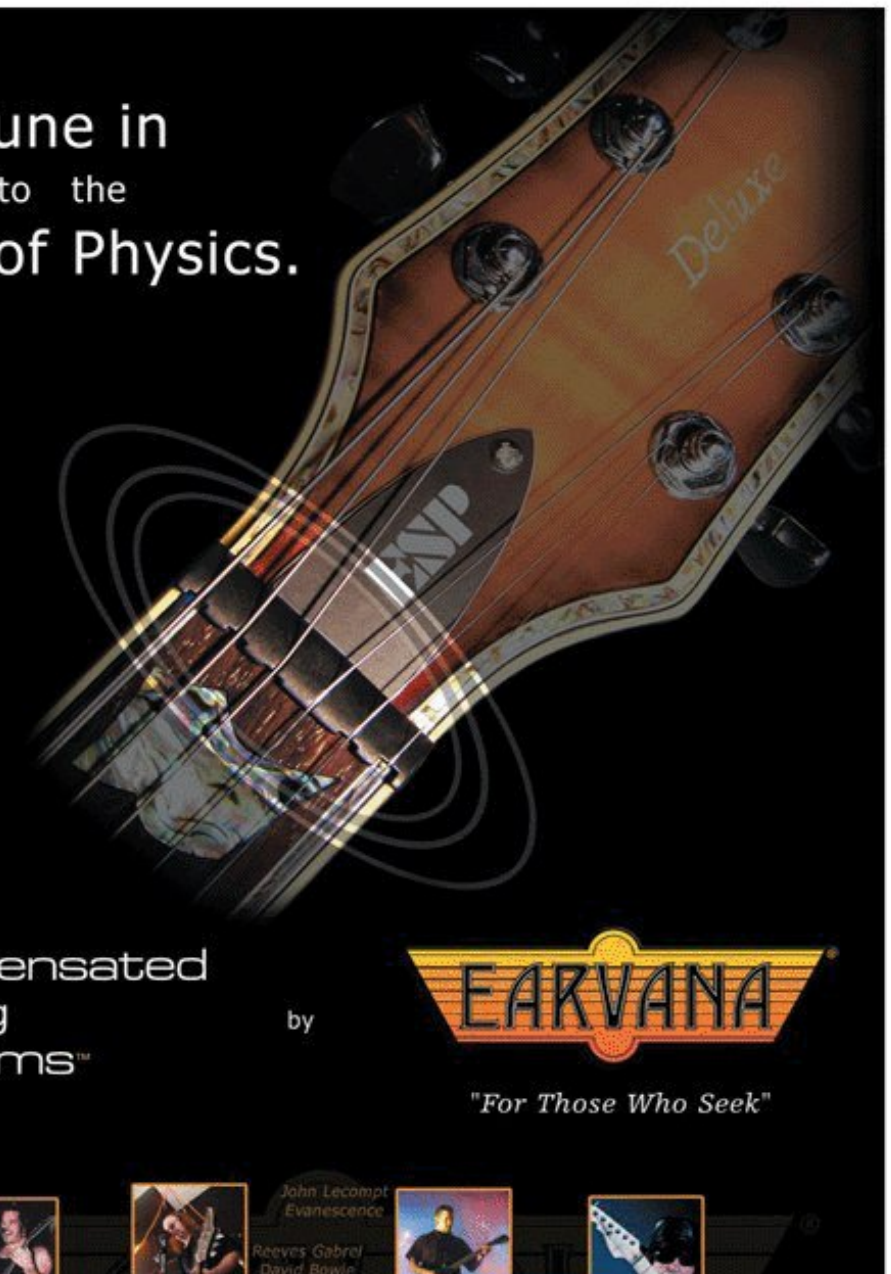

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The Cult of Tone

How Vanity, Iconography, and Chance Dictate Six-String Spirituality

BY JOHN BOHLINGER, ILLUSTRATION BY SARA LEGORE

Note from the Editors:

In this, the final part in our trilogy on the mysteries of tone, we examine the elements that shape guitarists' worldviews and define what they view as their Holy Grail of Tone. (If you missed the first two chapters, be sure to read "The Psychology of Tone" and "The Science of Tone" in the February and March 2010 issues, respectively.) In the first installment, we took a look at the subtleties of thought and perception that subconsciously guide us toward particular gear choices, while the second piece explored headier concepts like the fact that science cannot quantify and calibrate the elements of tone that most of us obsess over. And here in "The Cult of Tone," we unabashedly and unapologetically confront the experiences and circumstances that inspire the rampant tone fanaticism amongst players of all ages and stylistic preferences. Because, when we're truly honest with ourselves, we'll see that we guitarists are one of the most fundamentalist segments of society today.

Some would say that's a good thing—that it signals character and integrity in the face of the demonically buffeting winds issuing forth from Lady Gaga's gaping mouth of doom. But others believe such unquestioning devotion to the tones and gear of yesteryear is backward, ignorant, and dangerously close-minded. Maybe even dangerous enough to threaten the instrument's relevance and longevity.

As with religion in general, there will never be a conclusive answer who's right and who's wrong, but we invite you to take these questions seriously—to question your faith, your motivations, and your core musical principles. We hope you enjoy this series as much as we've enjoyed bringing it to you, and we look forward to hearing you testify, rant or sing praises in the comments section of this article on premierguitar.com. ▶▶▶

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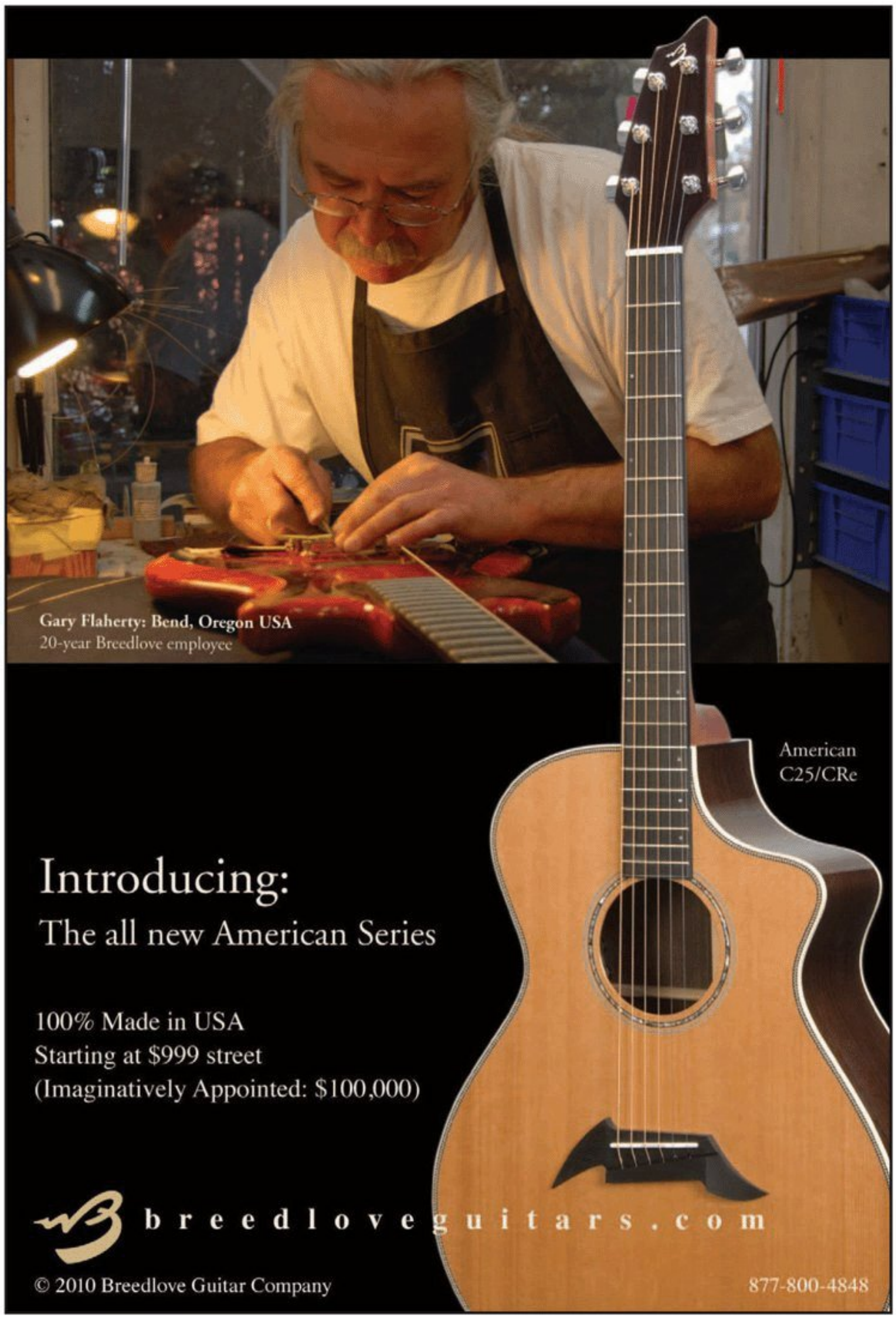
The Cult of Tone

When *Premier Guitar*'s Joe Coffey mentioned the Cult of Tone concept, I was immediately intrigued. As Joe put it, "A lot of people follow all the rituals involved with a certain tonal belief system… They don't question what the deities apparently wrote in stone and they don't question what the preachers are preaching." Whether or not we see it in ourselves, we all know people who embrace their own particular tone school of thought with the reverence and devotion of a religious zealot.

As a rule, I avoid discussions about religion because it's an incendiary topic that inevitably angers *somebody*. Rest assured, we will not drag God into this article. The goal here is to explore why we embrace certain sounds and examine the dogma of our secular beliefs about what sounds good and bad. Whenever the word "religion" appears anywhere, some people immediately stop reading and start threatening. To ensure nobody takes offense, let's define our terms using Dictionary.com:



re·li·gion – noun
1. a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects
2. something one believes in and follows devotedly

If you've ever struck up a conversation with the patchouli-wearing cashier at Whole Foods, you know that, for some, vegetarianism is in fact a religion. My father, a devout Catholic, is privately an apostle of baseball. He and I have taken several pilgrimages to the holy land—Yankee Stadium—to partake in the communion of beer and hot dogs. There are disciples of *Star Trek*, upholders of the Jedi way, those committed to Amway or Mary Kay, and then there's us, guitarists living the life of the faithful and steadfast, committed to our religion of tone. To any other demographic, reading a three-part series on the guitar tone would be about as exciting as a ten-part BBC series on the history of laundry folding. Not us. We devour this stuff the way others read Norman Vincent Peale study guides. We devote a great deal of our time, money, and both conscious and subconscious thoughts to chasing a sound. We revere some guitarists to the point of idolatry and unapologetic discipleship. In short, there is a religion of tone. Can I get an "amen"?

The Six Sects of Six-String Orthodoxy

Our belief systems separate us into what could be defined as denominations. Like any religion, there are sects that share the same basic principles but differ widely on details—which fractures them into separate factions or cults. Though there are probably hundreds of smaller splinter groups, the main denominations in the religion of Tone are:

- Tele-evangelists
- Disciples of Paul (Les, that is)
- Southern Strat-tists
- Gretsch-itarians
- Church of the Pointy Headstocks
- The Hollowbody Rollers

Players tend to be loyal to their denomination; they may visit others, but they tend to stick to the church they came up in. And when one of the faithful leaves our flock, we often experience a sense of betrayal. For instance, to this day I can't quite approve of Mark Knopfler playing a Les Paul. I love his playing. I love Les Pauls. I just don't like them together. You'd think 25 years would be long enough for me to get comfortable with the switch, but it still feels a bit like an infidelity. I felt the same

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breach of faith when I first learned that Jimmy Page, the High Priest of the Disciples of Paul, played his classic "Stairway to Heaven" solo on a Telecaster. As it turns out, there wasn't a Gibson on the entire track—the other parts were played on a damn Fender Electric XII! What the hell?! Conversely, Clapton's famous "woman tone" came before my time, so I'm sure it bothered some of his early disciples when he denounced his Gibson ES-335 and SG for the more subtle Strat sound. But for me, "Blackie" *is* Clapton. I mean, he's one of the founding Southern Strat-tists! Same goes for Jeff Beck; his Les Paul days predate my listening, so for me he is an unwavering priest in the church of Strat. Could you imagine Angus Young on a Telecaster, George Benson on an SG, or James Burton on an Ibanez? Sheer heresy. I'm sure these legendary players could make these guitars work—they may even sound better on these instruments. We just don't want to see it, and I do mean "see" it more than hear it.

Sacred Icons of Lust and Zeal

Ironically, our tone rituals are often more visual than aural. Think about this: the sting of betrayal seems to only occur when we see our deities aligning themselves with guitars from other denominations. The guitar greats change amplifiers and experiment with different pedals on a regular basis, but it's not that big of a deal to their followers even though amplifiers and effects are as responsible for a player's timbre as their guitar choice. But because the guitar is more visually associated with the player, whereas amps are in the background or hidden altogether, we feel uncomfortable with their change. Often, it's the sight and not the sound that indicates a more ritualistic than reasonable pattern of tone worship. If it's not entirely based on sound, what makes us align ourselves with one particular guitar denomination over the other?

It could be argued that one's theological religion depends more on geography than spirituality. It's no surprise that I am a Christian—I was born and raised in the United States in the 20th century. Had my ancestors hailed from India, I'd be Hindu. It's that simple. Likewise, our tonal beliefs are influenced by where we live. I live In Nashville, and I'm not sure you can even cross the border of Tennessee without a Telecaster on your person. Go southwest for 870 miles to Austin, walk into any live music venue, and there's an excellent chance you're going to see someone bludgeoning an old Stratocaster, SRV style. Or, head 880 miles north from Nashville to the clubs of New York, and you'll hear and see an inordinate number of Les Pauls, 335s or Strats retrofitted with humbuckers.

Speaking of the geography to tone relationship, to my ear, the two biggest pickup companies sound like the place they're built. DiMarzio pickups are New York. Like the city that never sleeps, DiMarzio pickups are LOUD, in your face, aggressive, "Fugetaboutit!" Conversely, Seymour Duncans sound laid back and cool just like the west coast—"It's all good." (Both companies have diverse product lines, but the pickups that put them both on the map fit the above descriptions to this player.) Why do sound regionalisms exist? Because our beliefs are in part shaped by our surroundings, whether it's the place where we were born or where we moved to.

The Ascension of Deities and Demigods

> *Can't you see he's the man, let me hear you applaud he is more than a man he's a shiny golden god.*
> —"Classico," Tenacious D

Clapton, Page, Hendrix, Django, Van Halen, Santana, Brent Mason, Danny Gatton, Roy Buchanan, Kirk Hammett, Slash, Jeff Beck, SRV, Duane Allman, Larry Carlton, Eric Johnson, Mark Knopfler, Steve Vai, Ritchie Blackmore, Skynyrd. Most of us learned to play by emulating the sounds of these guitar greats. We research and buy gear like our heroes use(d), not necessarily because it's the best but because they used it. Some boutique builders will argue that they make better Stratocaster-style and Telecaster-style guitars than Fender, but Fender remains the most coveted and popular because that's the brand played on all those classic albums of the past; this is a consumer decision based on ideology rather than facts. Our idols established the laws of tone, and most of us follow without question.

Have you ever gone back and listened critically to some of the guitar playing that first inspired you? Take some time to collect the isolated guitar tracks, (YouTube has some great ones); it's an amazing experience. When you strip away vocals, drums, keys, and bass to hear the naked, raw tone of legendary guitar tracks you'll experience some surprises. These are the sounds that inspired thousands of loyal devotees and millions of dollars in gear sales, but a truly open-minded listen will reveal the sublime and the downright ugly. Last year, I stopped into my friend Chuck Ainlay's studio while he was mixing Clapton's latest Crossroads DVD. I watched Chuck struggle with a mix that day because one of the guitar greats had a downright bad tone happening. Granted, this was a plug-and-pray festival where acts run on as the others run off, so there probably was some questionable backline gear and not much of a soundcheck. This guitar legend was playing well, but—yikes!—the poor engineer was left polishing a tone turd. This could have been a bad day or this guitar god may just have bad tone all the time. Who knows? But it was an ear-opening experience for me as an apostle of this player, and it helped me listen more critically to what's coming out of my amp.

Finding one's own personal sound is like any spiritual odyssey: It starts with what we are exposed to, but somewhere along the line something clicks inside of us and we become true disciples of the faith. I was raised in Montana, where old cornball country music was ubiquitous. Though I hated much of it at the time, I've come to appreciate the nostalgia of it probably more than the sound. What really shaped my tone quest were my hip parents and very cool older brother who exposed me to '70s rock, music that by today's standards has more in common with country music. The Eagles, the Dead, Dire Straits, the New Riders of the Purple Sage, or even "Lay Down Sally"-era Clapton and "Landslide"-era Fleetwood Mac sound far more like real country music than ▶▶▶

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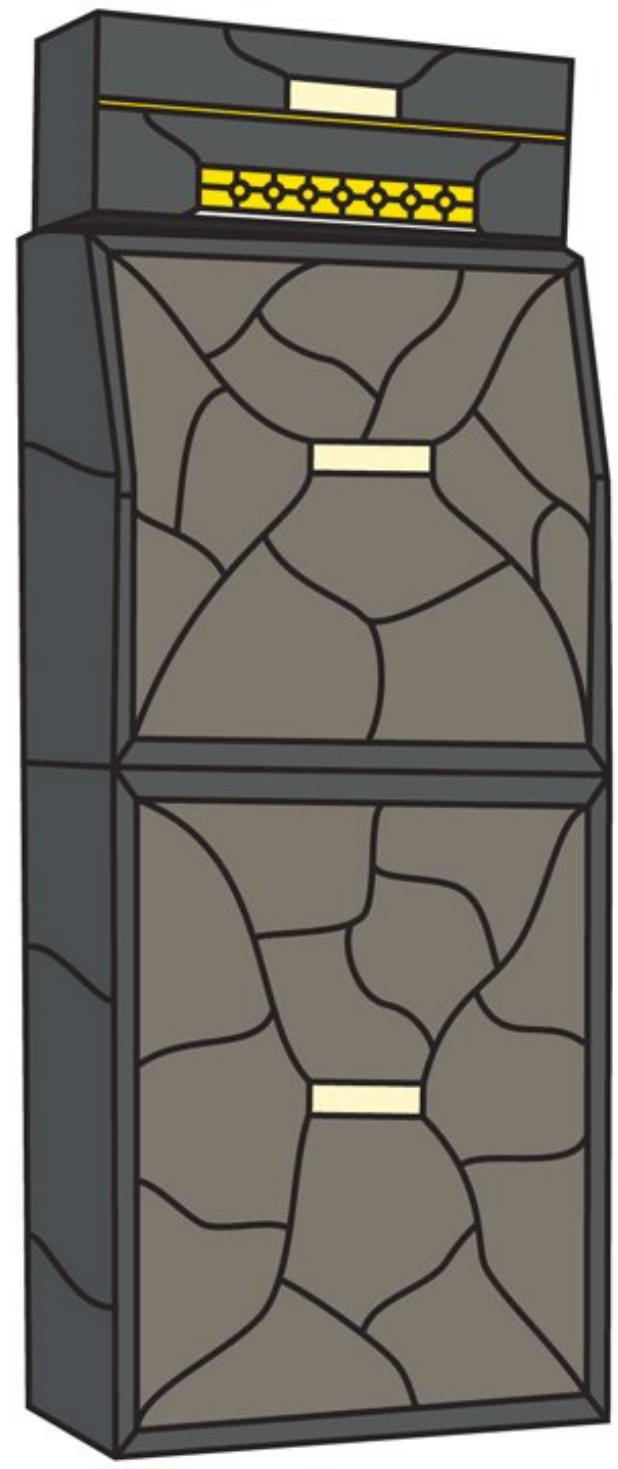
current artists leading that format (for example, Kenny Chesney, Taylor Swift and Rascal Flatts). My personal conversion experience that led to my joining the cult of Tele-evangelists came in 9th grade, when I watched Albert Lee open for Clapton at the local civic center. The scales fell away from my eyes. I saw the light and devoted myself to chasing that sound. I eventually followed that sound to Nashville, where I heard Brent Mason, the guy who probably influenced more people to pick up a Telecaster than anybody in the last 15 years. Mason's tone pretty much set the standard for what most Tele players strive for. Web message boards are full of conjecture about how he achieves his sound, making it seem more like mysticism than mechanics. I asked Mason about his own pilgrimage to tone, and he was kind enough to give us the keys to the kingdom.

"Oddly, I first got interested in the Tele when I heard Jerry Reed—the slinky, funky style, with claw-style double-stops," he says. "After that, it was definitely the country/jazzy style of Roy Nichols from the Strangers [Merle Haggard's band] that twisted my ear. Old blackface Fender amps and a Tele with single-coil pickups and an MXR Dyna Comp compressor in the chain. Later on," Mason continues, "I developed a little more overdrive in the sound by using a lower-wattage amp—like a '67 Fender Deluxe Reverb—on the Brooks & Dunn records, Alan Jackson, and so on. That was inspired by listening to Danny Gatton and Jeff Beck (even though Beck plays a Strat, he still goes to that back pickup randomly during a solo, and it had a beautiful tone). I now play through a '63 50-watt blackface Bassman head with an external cab and one channel souped up a bit. It was the best of both worlds."

It's really a shockingly normal story. I hear Mason play and it sounds like he's been touched by the hand of God. But as it turns out, he's just one of us—a guy that got turned on by a sound, chased it down, and developed it into his own. As his story corroborates, the actual tone of most guitar greats generally begins as an impersonation of another great. As the artist develops, their tone takes on its own unique signature that's so far away from the original source that one would be hard-pressed to find the sonic footprint. Reed and Nichols begat Mason, who begat Brad Paisley, and so on, but Mason's quintessential playing does not sound much like either of them (though once you know the reference, you can detect some small similarities). There are many examples of this. Les Paul was influenced by Django Reinhardt, and you can hear those crazy glissandos on pre-Mary Ford recordings, but you'd never guess it listening to his most popular work. Eddie Van Halen maintains that he modeled his tone after Eric Clapton, but they don't seem remotely similar to me. Their development as players is akin to people who are raised with certain worship rituals but then question what they really believe and strike out to find their own truth.



The Tympanic Membrane: An Intelligent Design or Evidence of Evolution?

If we strip away all dogma and the influence of our family and friends, what do we believe? Music, like spirituality, is so emotionally charged that it's difficult to define what and why something moves us. Why do we like what we like? Just as scientists hypothesize physical reasons for religious phenomena, there are some scientific explanations for why certain tones move us. Jason Dunaway, a damn fine bassist I've worked with in the past, happens to be a top electrical engineer who has helped design some of the gear most of us have used at one time or another. I asked Jason to weigh in for a scientific explanation of why we devote ourselves to certain tones.

"Our ears/brains are really amazing," he says. "We can divine an incredible amount of information very quickly by listening. Is it a real cry or are they just messing around? Is that my wife? Sarcasm, deceit, serious, playful, angry." In short, our hearing has an amazingly difficult job of picking up the tiniest nuance and processing the information. Roughly 100 million years of evolution was involved in developing these abilities—our ancestors' hearing had to be good to ensure survival of the species. So how does this relate to our choice in guitar tone? It goes back to survival. "Generally, when we are stressed or excited and want to verbally express it, we go up in volume and drive our vocal apparatus harder than normal," Jason continues. "Things get nonlinear and our normally smooth voices have more high-frequency content and volume than normal. Over time, we have come to perceive this changed harmonic content and increased volume as something that needs to have our attention. It may be danger, it may be an opportunity...but whatever it is, it excites us. It also says 'Listen to me!...ignore all that other stuff that's going on.'

"We find even-order distortion fairly pleasing," Jason explains. "That's essentially the addition of stacked octaves on top of the fundamental tone, and it is a result of asymmetrical distortion [*one side of a waveform being clipped more than the other*]. Odd-order distortion gives us odd multiples of the fundamental, which is not very musically pleasing. Where does every guitar, saxophone, vocal solo, or evangelical preacher go to bring the crowd to their feet? Loud, high, and way nonlinear. A scream has much more high frequency content than a normal speaking voice, regardless of volume."

And there you have it, folks. The reason the hair stands up on your arms when you hear a PRS ripping through a warm, fat tube amp is because your body has evolved over millions of years to respond to those nonlinear waves. Our bodies tell us that these sounds are important and we feel physically excited when we hear them. Conversely, these tones don't fit very well in an everyday context, as Jason learned from personal experience. "Tones that are used for everyday signaling, like a doorbell, are pretty simple. They don't alarm us too much. I once had a door chime that was the actual recording of Zeppelin "Black Dog"—for one day. Every time someone rang the doorbell, it scared the shit out of me!" ▶▶▶

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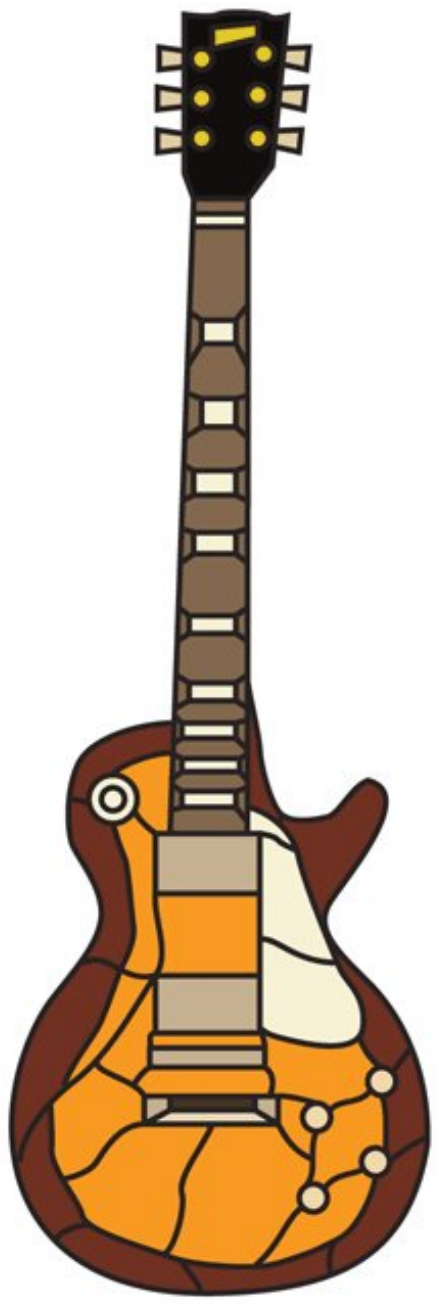
The Cult of Tone



Paradise Found

We are physically built to respond to certain tones, which helps explain why music means so much. Music, quite literally, has a power over us. And that gives it an almost mystical quality. Sure, there are scientific reasons why guitars make us feel the way they do, but what fun is that? Let miracles be miracles. Not to sound too new age-y/creepy, but guitar playing remains a religious experience for me. In one of his final interviews, Stevie Ray Vaughan summed up the religion of tone when he described recording the nine-minute instrumental "Riviera Paradise" to Larry Coryell in an interview in the now-defunct magazine *Musician*:

> **VAUGHAN:** To me, the song was a much-needed chance to turn the lights off in the studio and basically, I don't know any other way to put it, pray through my guitar.
>
> **CORYELL:** Ah. Man, that's an excellent way to put it.
>
> **VAUGHAN:** And be able to express some of the things to some of the people that I don't know how to talk to right now about what I need to talk to them about, say the things that I wish I could say, to become willing. Okay? And that's what I was doing. And it's funny, everybody else was in a separate room. I was in an isolation booth so I could be with my amps. They were all in the big studio with a window. And I just turned the lights off in my room. They couldn't see me. The drummer was tuning his drums while we were playing. I had my back to the engineer and the producer, Jim Gaines. They were in the control room going completely nuts because the tape was about to run out. And it was funny because none of this ever crossed my mind. I just knew we were gonna play the song once and it was all gonna be just fine.

Maybe music, like prayer, is our primitive attempt at expressing the ineffable—a way to let the notes say what we cannot. Maybe much of what we do is empty worship ritual, but I remain one of the faithful.

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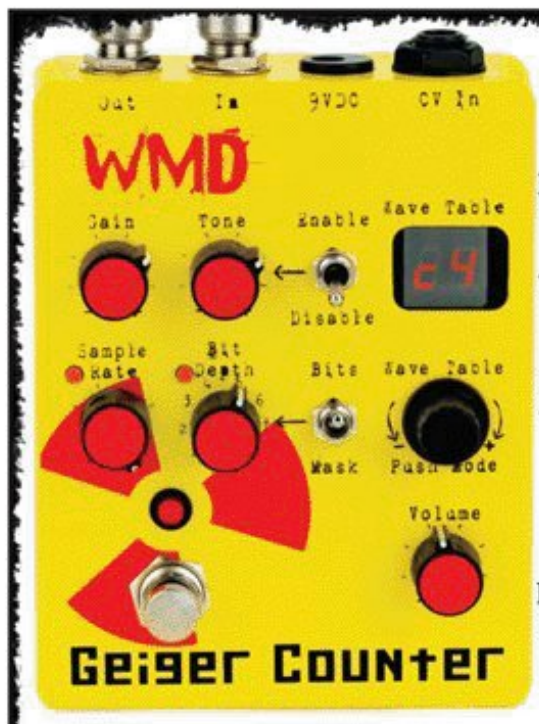

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DIGIDESIGN

Eleven Rack

BY GARY GUZMAN

There's been a lot of buzz about the Eleven Rack, the revolutionary new guitar recording and effects processing system from Digidesign. Along with that buzz come a lot of questions from producers, engineers and guitar players: Exactly how does it work, and how will it help me as a player or producer? How can this be used both in the studio and live? And of course, how does it sound? I quickly learned that it's not just a multi-effects unit, it's not just an amp modeler and it's not just a Pro Tools interface. It's actually all of the above and more. The Eleven Rack is an all-in-one solution for the modern guitar player, and it makes it easier than ever to record in the studio and perform live—while fully integrating the exact same sounds in both situations.

The Eleven Rack can be used as a stand-alone guitar processor—without the need for a computer—for live applications. It includes incredible emulations of classic guitar amps, cabinets and stompboxes, as well as a powerful collection of studio-quality rackmount effects processors and microphone emulations. You can also incorporate your favorite stompboxes and effects into the Eleven Rack with an integrated effects loop that can be assigned and moved almost anywhere within the signal chain.

In addition, the Eleven Rack performs double duty as a high-quality interface for Digidesign Pro Tools, and it comes with Pro Tools LE 8 recording, editing and mixing software. The interface itself is dual-DSP powered, which means you won't have to worry about latency issues when recording—and it also frees up processing power in the computer. There are eight simultaneous recording channels at 24-bit/96 kHz, with a wide array of ins and outs, including S/PDIF, AES/EBU, XLR, and 1/4" outputs, a mic input, and two 1/4" line level inputs. The Pro Tools software includes over 70 plug-ins, including reverb, delay, chorus, distortion, flanger, phaser, reverse, EQ and compression. It also contains powerful virtual instruments to create backing tracks, including drum machines, piano, organ, synthesizer and a synth/sample workstation with tons of instruments. Basically, it's got everything you need to create a high-quality recording all on your own.

A Long Time in the Making

I've been using Pro Tools since the mid '90s. Back then, I used it mostly for editing and mixing digital audio. MIDI sequencing wasn't fully integrated into the software yet, so I had to use separate sequencing software and import audio from my programmed tracks into Pro Tools for mixing. There also weren't any decent amp-simulator plug-ins at the time, so anytime I wanted to record guitar I did it the old-fashioned way, by placing a mic in front of my amp and recording into Pro Tools. I had to be fully committed in terms of guitar sound, because there was no chance of changing my guitar tone later by re-amping since I never split my guitar signal to record a separate, uneffected guitar track. Pro Tools software has grown a lot over the years, and I've watched each improvement with satisfaction. Creativity flowed a lot more frequently and easily as more and more plug-ins and features were created. First, MIDI sequencing became more integrated, and eventually more amp simulators and effects for guitarists became available. I've tried them all and found something I liked in each one of them. When Digidesign released the Eleven amp-simulator plug-in, I thought it really captured the essence and sound of some classic amps. Still, I didn't use it exclusively because it just didn't have the wide array of effects and amps that I found in other guitar plug-ins.

I will admit that when I first heard about the Eleven Rack, I quickly (and incorrectly) assumed it was just a hardware version of the Eleven plug-in with the same amp sounds and parameters that could be easily adjusted using the real knobs on the interface instead. When I saw that it was also an interface for Pro Tools LE, I thought, "Why do I need that? I already have Pro Tools software with an interface and the Eleven plug-in?" Well, you know what happens when you assume! After reading and learning more about the

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Eleven Rack and all of its features, I couldn't have been more wrong. I really wanted to hear how the amps and effects sounded, especially since so many of them weren't previously available in the Eleven plug-in. Also, I was curious to see if the Eleven Rack interface would work in conjunction with my existing Digidesign 002 Rack interface, or if it would actually replace it.

Plugging In

When I finally got my hands on the Eleven Rack, I decided to test out its capabilities initially as a stand-alone guitar processor. The first thing I noticed when plugging in my guitar was the True-Z input jack. This unique guitar input was created to replicate the impedance of guitar amps and stompboxes, which results in amazingly realistic sounds. Since each guitar reacts differently with every amp or effect, the True-Z input basically changes the input impedance automatically to whatever amp or effect is first in the signal chain. And the Eleven Rack isn't using a DSP algorithm to do that—it uses actual analog switching with real capacitors and resistors.

Before hooking the unit to an amp, I wanted to hear the pure clean output, so I plugged in my headphones and began scrolling through the presets. I was instantly welcomed with lush amp sounds and effects, and each preset sounded great. One thing I noticed right away was that the Eleven Rack not only sounds like a real amp, it feels like a real amp as well—more than any other modeling unit I've played through before. The dynamics were terrific, and Eleven Rack really responded like an amp should. It actually sounds like a speaker pushing air, which is something you can't always hear in other amp simulators.

Each preset had very usable tones with different combinations of amps and effects. Many presets sounded great as is, and I would only tweak them slightly to my taste. I'm a firm believer in presets. They can save you a lot of time, and they can also serve as a great foundation for customizing and tweaking your own custom sounds. There are 104 presets in the Eleven Rack, with an additional 104 user presets that you can customize and then save. With every preset, the indicator light on the knob is amber (or green for effects) but once you change a parameter, the knob changes to red. You can also swap out any amp or effect for any other—and place it anywhere in the signal chain. So if you want to move the wah effect between distortion and the amp, you can easily do so.

I only had one minor issue with the presets: once you scroll to the very end of the user presets, it doesn't circle back to the very first factory preset. You have to scroll back through all banks to get to the first one again.

This One Goes to Eleven

I then connected the unit to an amp. The Eleven Rack offers two 1/4" amplifier output jacks. Output 1 is on the front panel, which can easily be connected to the input of an amplifier. Output 2 is on the back, and it can be used to connect either to one amp or to an additional amp for stereo output. I connected it to an amp and set it to a clean, neutral sound. With this setup, I can choose any emulated amp head from within Eleven Rack and my external amp is transformed instantly. I had a nice variety of tones from the 16 amp heads I had to choose from—from a '59 Fender Bassman to a '92 Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier. All of them sounded great, and none felt like emulations. The True-Z input is a big part of that, because those analog components make it feel like a real amp. Also, the developers painstakingly inspected every component of many amps and incorporated nuances that other amp-modeling developers overlook, like power-amp sag, cabinet resonance, and ghost notes.

Another nice feature about Eleven Rack is that you can send whatever you want out to the amp, whether it's the entire sound of the rig with effects and amp simulator, effects only, or any point in between. So for example, if you want to include all of the effects and the amp from Eleven Rack without the speaker simulator, you would choose "Rig Out – No Cab."

I love the fact that I can have so many options for whatever part of Eleven Rack I want to use. An effects loop is built in as well, so you can still include your favorite stompboxes and effects. Also, if you have a favorite amp that you prefer to use live, you can choose to only use the Eleven Rack's effects. But if you want to leave your amp at home, you can simply use the entire Eleven Rack rig live and connect it directly to the PA with the XLR outputs.

Backward Compatibility

I was able to use Eleven Rack with my existing Digidesign 002 Rack interface easily. After updating Pro Tools to version 8.0.1, I connected the digital ins and outs of the Eleven Rack to the 002 Rack and connected the Eleven Rack to my computer via USB. Pro Tools recognizes the unit immediately after launching the software, and an Eleven Rack control window comes up. I actually preferred to control the Eleven Rack with this window, because adjusting certain parameters was a lot easier. You can click and drag effects anywhere within the graphic representation of the signal chain. Also, the ▶▶▶

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DIGIDESIGN
Eleven Rack

label for each effect has a pull-down menu so you can quickly choose and swap out different effects with one click. Selecting presets was also a breeze, because one window comes up with all presets listed, instead of requiring endless scrolling with the knob on the unit itself.

You can record the guitar signal into three different tracks of Pro Tools. The first is the clean, uneffected signal that you can use to re-amp the guitar later. The second track is the output of Eleven Rig with any and all effects or amps. The third is what really makes the Eleven Rack unique: you can embed the audio file with any of the Eleven Rack settings that were used to record the track. So if you need to call up the session at a later time to replace one line of a guitar solo, you can instantly recall the settings with the exact same sound as when you recorded the original track. This is pretty much a lifesaver for me, since I hardly ever write down my settings or make detailed notes for every parameter I tweak.

The Final Mojo

There are so many features on the Eleven Rack that make life easier for the recording guitarist. Some may think that 16 amp models aren't enough, but with so many combinations of the 16 amps, 7 cabinet emulations, and 8 microphone emulations within the unit—as well as all of the effects—I had more than enough tonal variety to work with. Also, some guitarists may not use Pro Tools out of fear that the software would be too intimidating to learn. You would definitely have to use Pro Tools to take advantage of all the Eleven Rack features, but the software is easy to learn and use. I love the fact that Eleven Rack enables you to be as simple or complex as you want, too. If you want to quickly call up a sound and jam, you can do that. If you're an endless tweaker who is meticulous about every aspect of your signal chain, you have complete control over every amp, cabinet, effect and mic emulation. As a stand-alone unit without Pro Tools or a computer, guitarists will love using the Eleven Rack live and in the studio. As a complete recording and effects-processing system, the Digidesign Eleven Rack makes recording guitar easier and more efficient than ever before.

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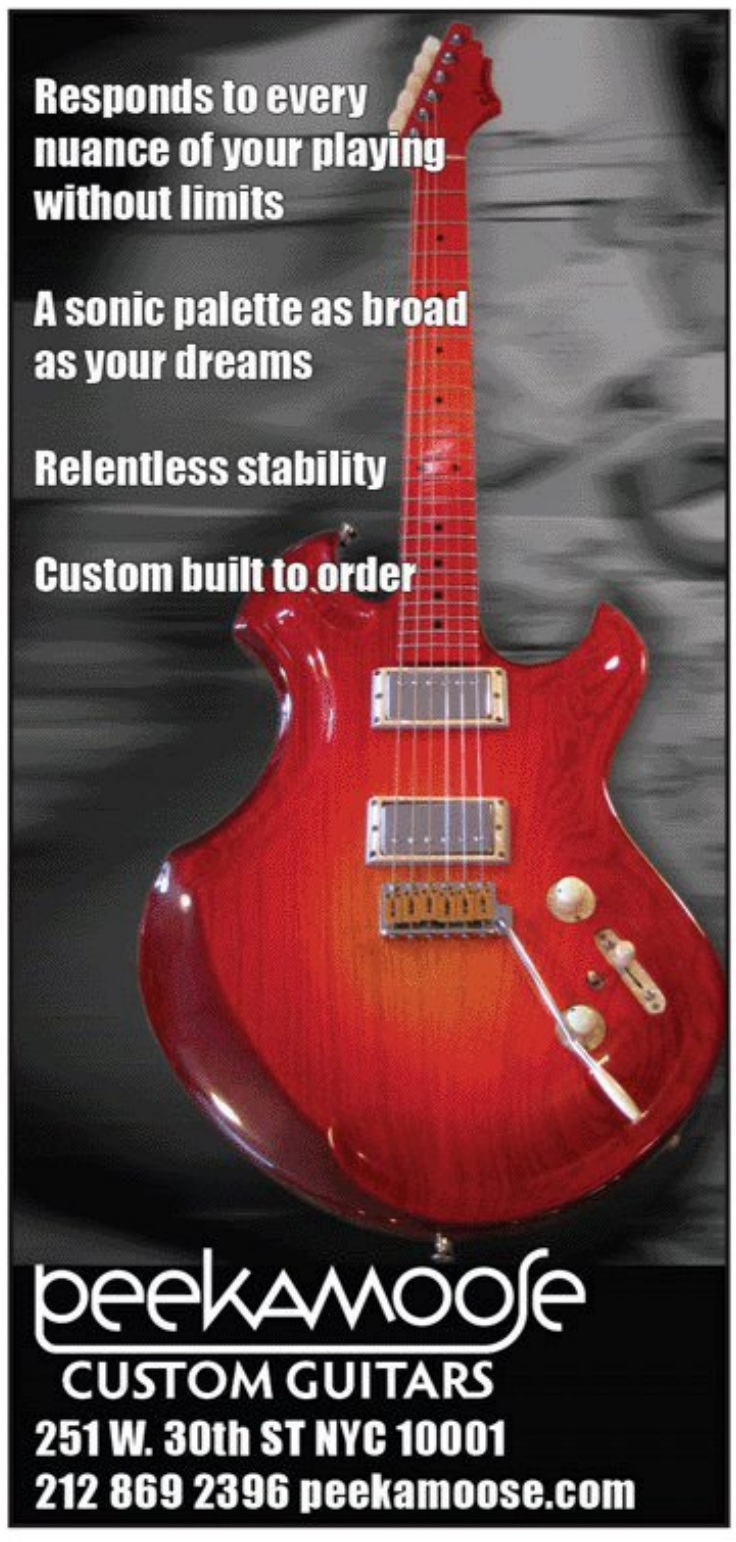

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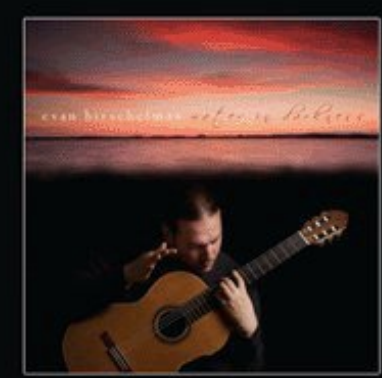

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FENDER

American Special Stratocaster and Telecaster

BY CHRIS BURGESS AND JORDAN WAGNER

The new American Special series represents Fender's efforts to "bring the full Fender experience of a terrific-sounding, smooth-playing, rock-solid-built US-made Fender guitar to the workingman without emptying his bank account."

We assume that even the functionally clueless can appreciate what a challenge that must have been, since in practice it means giving players the ability to bring home a new, US-made Fender for a price that is basically (once you've adjusted for inflation) a fraction of what a new American Fender electric used to cost, even during the heydey of American manufacturing—and at a time when so many foreign-made guitars have clearly demonstrated themselves as equals to their domestic rivals in quality, even exceeding many of them in value. To have an American-made Fender for the price of a foreign-made Fender in 2010 is some dream, and the fact that Fender appears to have pulled it off is, we think, a testament to the company's determination to continue satisfying the demands of its customers even as those demands become more… well, challenging.

Finding the Line

Assessing the value these newcomers offer to working guitarists, however, turns out to be quite a challenge in itself. Fender has been very successful at its strategy of offering ever more variations on two of the most archetypal electrics in existence—namely the Telecaster and the Stratocaster—and there are nearly as many iterations of these storied instruments as there are kinds of players. The American Special series, like the Highway One and Classic Player series before it, isn't out to offer an instrument so particular that it's totally unlike anything already available in Fender's lineup, so those looking at this new series will rightly wonder if they have anything new to offer, and if they justify replacing the trusted and well-worn Fender guitars already in their possession.

Quite a large number of players, though, have expressed a desire for an American-made guitar that doesn't come at a premium price. And supplying that is something new for Fender, even if the instruments themselves aren't a radical departure from previous offerings. At what point does the trade-off become reasonable? Street price for the American Special Series comes in right around $800, and Fender has numerous Mexican-made instruments at that price point—quite effectively blurring the line between USA-made and foreign-made instruments. So, the real question is: how important is the fact that they're made in the United States? As we've said, props should be given to Fender for answering the call from players and addressing the desire for legendary American-made quality at a price that's affordable. Indeed, the key ingredient in the American Special recipe is the "made in the U.S.A." label, but that might turn out to be something of a shibboleth. Some players will only buy US-made guitars for ethical reasons, and want to feel that they're supporting the American worker. Others purchase them based on the assumption that they're of a higher quality simply because they're made in the United States. For those to whom it means a lot, it means a lot, but for the price-conscious buyer looking for a workhorse Fender electric with which to pay the bills (or at least some of them), it's less clear how important that will be. What is important is how they measure up in quality to their more expensive domestic brethren, and whether they're on par with Fender's top-of-the-line foreign-made models.

With the number of models Fender currently produces bearing the Strat and Tele namesakes, it's best to compare the American Specials to those they have most in common with: the American Standard series and the Mexican-made Standard and Highway One lines.

Comparing Offerings

In relation to its south-of-the-border brethren, the American Special Strat and Tele both have some subtle yet apparent differences. There are 22 frets instead of the Standard's 21, and the

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fret size is full jumbo, as opposed to the medium jumbo on the Standard. Like the Standard, the American Special features a standard truss rod and no micro-tilt adjustment. The neck is finished in a satin urethane and capped off with a large '70s-era Fender headstock, but it has a different feel compared to the satin urethane neck of the Mexican Standard. Part of that difference might be due to the extra 1 mm of width at the nut—this might seem like a trivial thing to note, but players used to the 42 mm spacing of other Fenders might wonder why the neck feels a little strange to them. In most every aspect of the neck, the American Special is closest to the Highway One line. Another important detail to point out is that, like the Highway One, the American Special offers only a maple fingerboard on the single-coil Strat (the American Special HSS Strat board is rosewood), whereas the Standard and American Standard models have a rosewood option.

Finish options for the American Specials are minimal compared to those offered for both the Standard and American Standard models, with only two available for each model, compared to the former's five and the latter's seven. The American Specials we received for review do indeed display high-quality gloss urethane finishes—as good as any Fenders we've seen. Like many players, this pair of reviewers leans toward nitrocellulose finishes, when they're available, for the sonic qualities those guitars exhibit. In this regard, we think the Highway One models might have a leg up for many, but there's no lack of guitarists who'd rather have a glossy finish.

Stratocaster

The Standard Stratocaster is equipped with a set of ceramic magnet-powered single-coil pickups, but the American Special Strat ups the ante with Fender's popular Texas Special pickups, and it shares Fender's unique Greasebucket circuit with the Highway One line. The Greasebucket wiring allows the player to roll down the Tone control without adding any bass to the sound, a problem that is the bane of many a single-coil guitarist. It works as described—though it's more effective on the Strat than the Tele, which does drift toward muddiness as you roll the knob down.

Another major difference is the bridge: where the American Standard model utilizes a 2-point vibrato with bent steel saddles, the Special comes fitted with a vintage-style bridge that is similar to the one employed on the Standard.

Telecaster

Obviously, the Telecaster is a very different beast from its Stratocaster cousin. The American Special model has a major element in common with its original ancestor, and that is the inclusion of a string-through vintage-style bridge with three brass saddles supporting the six strings. We're big fans, and we applaud Fender for the decision. In comparison, the Standard Telecaster has a modern style bridge with individual saddles and a string-through body. While the added coupling from the string-through design helps with sustain, the brass saddles from the American Special Tele help it fit more in line with the vintage, bright and twangy sounds of yesteryear. Like the American Special Stratocaster (and the Highway One Tele), it features Fender's Greasebucket wiring, an additional 1 mm at the nut, Jumbo frets, Texas Special pickups and an additional 22nd fret.

Playability and Tone

Any player with some real mileage on the odometer, who's not a newcomer to Fender, will have developed some preferences where the Stratocaster and Telecaster are concerned, and it's for certain that one of the trade-offs that makes the American Special series possible is a limited set of options. For players who find these guitars chock-full of their favorite features, they're sure to be more satisfying than for those who gravitate toward different specs. In the interest of full disclosure, this pair of reviewers has to admit we find ourselves a little more in latter camp. We do tend to be more finicky about Strats than Teles—a disposition that is not uncommon. It may be simply the fact that the Tele is in many ways a much simpler instrument, while the Strat has always been, in the succinct words of one of our colleagues, "a delicate balancing act." We tend to prefer rosewood boards on our Strats, but we like maple just fine on our Teles. Neither of us is crazy about the super-size frets, though we're more agnostic when it comes to the larger headstocks and the differences between the 2-point and vintage-style tremolo systems.

Both American Specials did require significant setup work upon arrival, but both yielded gracefully to the undertaking. They are as accommodating and playable as any of their like, and the modern C-shaped neck is comfy and familiar. The fretwork is good, and the Texas Special pickups on both guitars obediantly delivered the signature tones we were looking for when we plugged them into a Vox AC30CC2. The Strat has plenty of quack in the notched positions; the bridge pickup has just the right amount of cutting bite without the harsh brightness; and the neck pickup offered up a characteristic bluesy swagger. All three are balanced well with each other in terms of output, and they ▶▶▶

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FENDER
American Special Stratocaster and Telecaster

clean up nicely when you roll the Volume knob off. Our only reservation here is with the taper of the Strat's volume pot, which leaves a little to be desired in terms of its evenness and usefulness for volume swells.

Like the Strat, the American Special Tele's pickups are on the hot side, with plenty of sizzle. They too are well balanced, though they tend much more toward modern sounding even with the traditional bridge. The brass saddles do seem to provide all the snap and bite we like to hear in a Telecaster, and they didn't frustrate our efforts to achieve a workable intonation. We didn't like the sound of the bridge pickup with the Volume and Tone knob maxed (a go-to setting for both of us) as much as we wanted to, but we have to admit we've been fairly spoiled by the sound of the Mexican-made Road Worn '50s Telecaster we acquired last year. It has bona fide vintage tone and a degree of subtlety and tonal versatility that's hard to compete with. Despite that, the American Special Telecaster does have what it takes to satisfy many, if not all, Tele afficionados.

The Final Mojo

We found the build quality, fit and finish of the American Special Stratocaster and Telecaster to be on a par with many of Fender's top Mexican-made offerings, but we can't say they've exceeded them. For the price, that means a good, solid value—provided buyers aren't set on having a wider variety of options available to them. Those who do know exactly what they want in an über-reliable Fender axe would probably do well to consider the long-term benefits of stepping up to an American Standard, even if it means a little more money. PG

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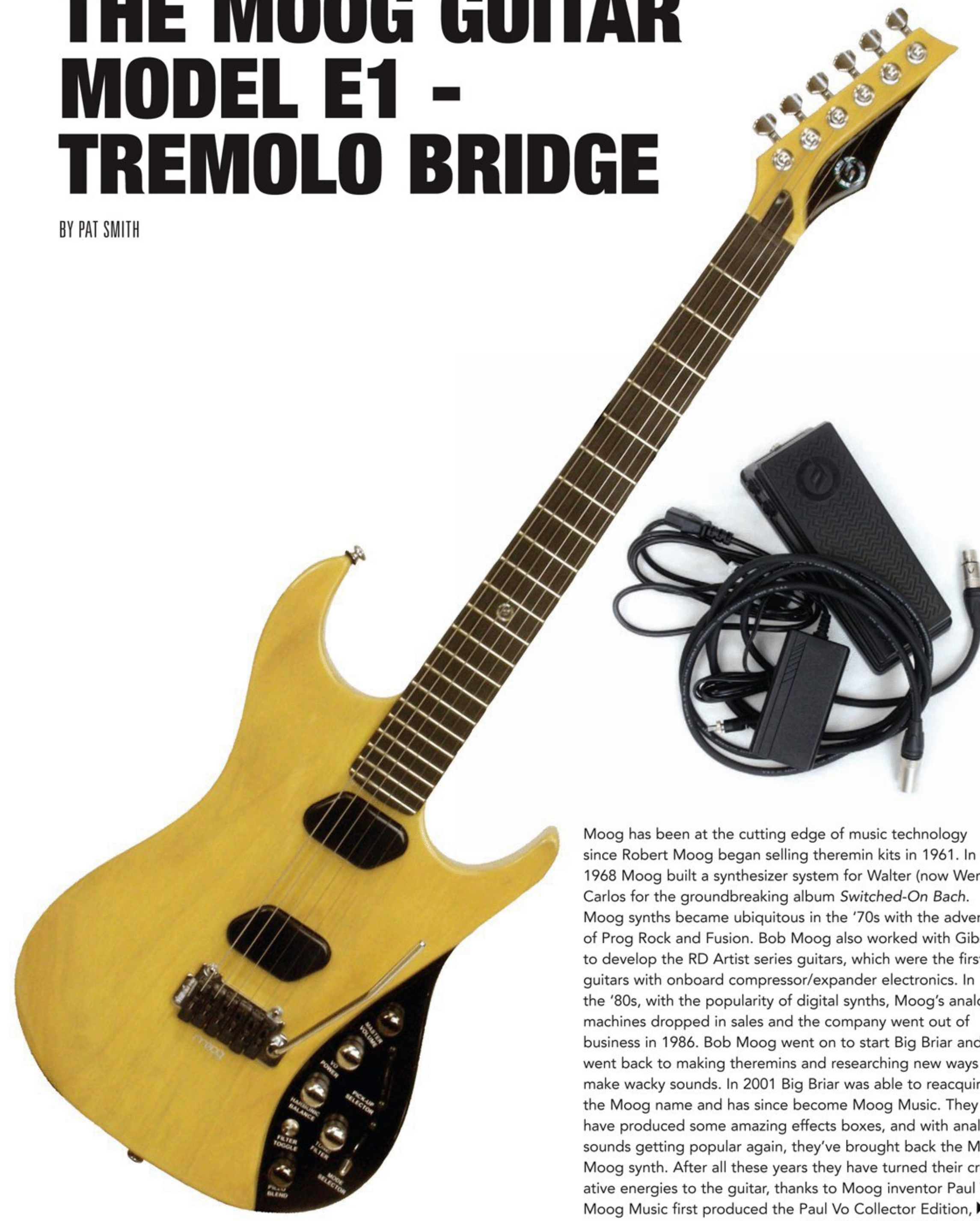
THE MOOG GUITAR MODEL E1 - TREMOLO BRIDGE

BY PAT SMITH



Moog has been at the cutting edge of music technology since Robert Moog began selling theremin kits in 1961. In 1968 Moog built a synthesizer system for Walter (now Wendy) Carlos for the groundbreaking album *Switched-On Bach*. Moog synths became ubiquitous in the '70s with the advent of Prog Rock and Fusion. Bob Moog also worked with Gibson to develop the RD Artist series guitars, which were the first guitars with onboard compressor/expander electronics. In the '80s, with the popularity of digital synths, Moog's analog machines dropped in sales and the company went out of business in 1986. Bob Moog went on to start Big Briar and went back to making theremins and researching new ways to make wacky sounds. In 2001 Big Briar was able to reacquire the Moog name and has since become Moog Music. They have produced some amazing effects boxes, and with analog sounds getting popular again, they've brought back the Mini Moog synth. After all these years they have turned their creative energies to the guitar, thanks to Moog inventor Paul Vo. Moog Music first produced the Paul Vo Collector Edition, ▶▶▶

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which had fancy wood and $6500 price tag. The new E1 has the same guts and is basically a less fancy version for 3k less.

The Naked Facts

The E1 has an Alder body with a 25.5"-scale maple neck and ebony fingerboard. The guitar is USA-made and looks clean with excellent fretwork. It is available in three colors: Candy Red, Black, and Butterscotch. Our sample has the Wilkinson by Gotoh vibrato bar, which is much better than your average non-locking whammy. There is also a piezo pickup system to give simulated acoustic sound that can be mixed in with the electric sound as desired. The two pickups are made by Moog and are an essential part of the system, so don't plan on replacing them. To me, the pickups sound all right but not exceptionally good. They are not super hot, and the overall guitar sound is very clean, albeit somewhat sterile. The natural sustain is very good. For more on features be sure to read Michael Ross' article, "Hands On With The Moog Guitar" in the Oct. 2008 issue of PG.

You Want Sustain? No Problemo

Now let's get down to it. The reason you'd spend over 3K for this axe isn't because of the guitar; it's because of what it does. When I was asked to review the E1, I was expecting some sort of new guitar synth. Well that's not what this is—in fact, Moog has only just made MIDI compatibility an option, and our review sample doesn't have it. Even so, I was surprised by what I found. The sounds the E1 makes basically all come from the strings, and they're very organic. Moog and Vo have made a system that will stimulate the strings to sustain endlessly. Conversely, this same technology allows for the system to mute the strings. There is also the Controlled Sustain mode, which mutes the strings you're not playing and gives energy to the strings you are, which is a neat feature for soloing. In addition, they include the Moog Ladder Filter, which is a sort of tone shift—think new fangled wah-wah.

The guitar, let's face it, tends to be a staccato instrument, so for a long time players have searched for ways to get more sustain. This path led from nylon to steel strings to electric guitars and experiments with feedback, fuzz boxes, compressors and a host of other stuff. With the Moog you can just skip all that, sustain is here to spare. There are three positions on the Mode Selector: Mute, Controlled Sustain and Infinite Sustain. You won't hear a huge difference in sound between the two sustain modes—the Controlled Sustain mode blends the Infinite Sustain and the Mute modes by giving energy only to the strings being played while muting those that aren't—but the way they respond differently to your playing is pretty cool. This makes it easy for players who want sustain for soloing, but don't want to worry about muting the other strings with their right hand.

How the sustain actually feels as you play is a bit curious. There is a slight delay in the time from when you pluck the string to when you feel the sustain grab on to the sound. The result, to me, is that the E1 is best at a legato approach—long, sustained chords work great. For single-note lines you really aren't going to play fast shred stuff, as it just misses the point of the sustainer. Playing up and down on a single string works really well, since the string stays stimulated and you avoid the restart delay feel. The infinite sustain really does require you to rethink the way you play guitar, as does the mute function. The mute can give you a sort of banjo-like attack, basically all attack and no sustain.

All this would be more than enough for most, but wait, don't order yet… the E1 comes with a control pedal, so what you hear is the low harmonic and with the pedal you can move to the high harmonic. In sustain mode you can use the pedal to control which pickup generates the sustain, and when you move the pedal to either the heel or toe position, the other pickup is actually muting the strings at that position. With the control pedal centered, both pickups give equal amounts of energy, giving you the strongest response to the strings. When you engage either the Controlled filter or the Articulated filter, that Harmonic Blending option becomes available on the E1's control panel (the center-notched knob next to the Filter Toggle switch). This is way cool, and it offers such a great textures that you'll want to spend a lot of time exploring it.

Flip the Filter Toggle switch and the pedal controls the ladder filter for what Fareed Haque called "a wah-wah pedal for the new millennium." Of course it's not a wah-wah, but that's the neighborhood it lives in. I would be remiss to not make a quick mention of the classic EBow, which was the first thing that gave infinite sustain to guitarists. It is a great product, but the E1's possibilities go much farther, as it's polyphonic. The E1 is easier to use and can do all the EBow does and frankly, it does it better. The E1's response seems smoother and much more controllable, and with the pedal and everything else I mentioned there's just no contest.

The Final Mojo… or Is It?

The E1 is a whole new deal, which requires you to completely rethink the way you play guitar and how you make music in general. There will be players who will have no interest in this at all, but for others this will be the ultimate instrument. If Allan Holdsworth doesn't have one, I would be surprised. The recent inclusion of MIDI compatibility seems only natural to me; in fact, it's hard to imagine why they even made these without it—perhaps to show how much can be done without a synth? Anyway you look at it, it is amazing to have synth-like sustain coming from strings. I can see the E1 being a staple in every studio in the same way the Yamaha DX7 was in the '80s. The possibilities for orchestral music also seem very exciting. I mean, why not skip the fake string ensemble and have real string sounds? I am also sure we'll be hearing sustained single-note solos in songs on the radio real soon. As many times as reviewers will say something like, "This changes everything," I guess I'll say it anyway. This changes everything, so go check it out.

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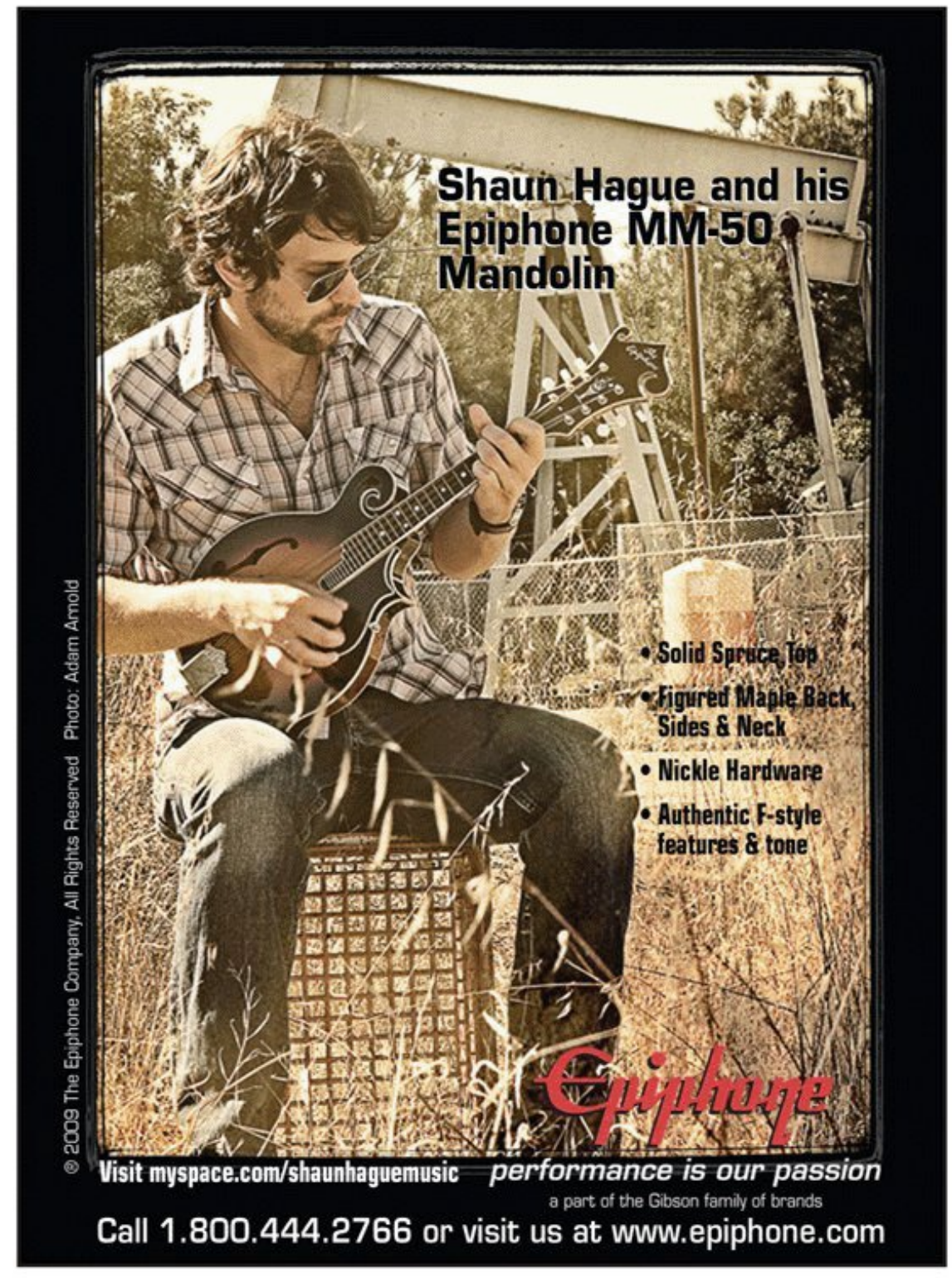

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TC Electronic PolyTune

BY JORDAN WAGNER

How many times have you been playing a set of chords to a tune and hearing one note in the passage that just sounds a little sour compared to the rest? The only way to know for sure which one is to check all of the strings at once, which is time-consuming and frustrating onstage. In addition, many players (including myself) have relied on one tuner for years at a time. Even the most discontent gearheads among us—those who trade pedals the way others exchange sports cards—have likely stuck with one reliable tuner that's been expected to last in its pedalboard location. In short, it would take the prospect of a very big improvement to kick the most used pedal on the board to the proverbial curb. Enter the TC Electronic PolyTune, which aims to do just that. Dubbed the world's first polyphonic tuner, the PolyTune enables you to tune not just one string at a time, but detect tuning discrepancies in every string at once.

Tune Here, Here...and Here

When I first heard about the PolyTune, I wasn't really sure what to make of it. The concept was sound and the idea very intriguing, but questions about its accuracy loomed large. How could it possibly figure out, from the jumbled, discordant sound of all the open strings hit together, which ones were out of tune? More importantly, would it be strong enough to knock my trusty Korg DT-10 off of my board? Eager to test its mettle, I grabbed my 1978 Gibson Les Paul Custom and plugged it into the PolyTune, which in turn was connected to an Orange Tiny Terror combo. I knew full well that the Les Paul was already in tune, so I randomly turned the tuning knobs in different directions to throw it out of whack, and then hit the open strings with the PolyTune engaged. The result on the LED screen was a simple readout of six small red indicators, each representing one of the strings I'd just struck. As I slowly tuned the low *E* up, I could see its corresponding LED indicator rise, eventually morphing into a green line indicating it was in tune. Guitarists who play live will absolutely love this feature, as it quickly tells them which string is out of tune without having to waste time trying to find it one by one.

When you pick just one string at a time, the PolyTune automatically displays a more familiar monophonic readout—a strobe display similar to a Korg Pitchblack or the ever-popular Boss compact pedal tuner (now the TU-3). It was really cool watching it flip back and forth between these modes—I tried in vain to confuse its ability to detect what I was playing. Even running a Boss DS-1distortion pedal in front of the PolyTune couldn't knock its accuracy off. As a matter of fact, it strengthened it! The individual string indicators snapped to position much faster with the distortion running in front of the tuner, which still amazes me. Surprisingly, the easiest way to bewilder the tuner was to employ a dropped tuning on the lowest string. The single-note tuning mode accurately detected the pitch, but the polyphonic mode became useless at that point. The PolyTune can only make use of this mode when the guitar is in standard tuning. On the plus side, it can detect standard tuning when transposed, even all the way down to B. This is good, but it would have been nice if the PolyTune could've understood dropped-D, considering how common that tuning is. Luckily, the standard strobe readout handled individual string tuning very accurately, no matter what note I was aiming for. The PolyTune also has one more trick up its sleeve. Hidden in the casing is an ambient light sensor that adjusts the brightness of the LED readout according to the amount of light present in the area. Since a lot of us play the occasional outdoor show or festival, I decided to test this by placing the tuner directly in the sun while tuning a guitar outside. Though I felt rather goofy standing in the *PG* parking lot tuning the Strat, the readout was perfectly detectable without any glare. Nice.

The Final Mojo

I'm as guilty as the next gear fanatic of acquiring and flipping pedals over and over. My tuner, on the other hand, has always been the one thing I've hardly ever thought about changing. Now that I think about it, I'm pretty sure I've traded it out only two or three times—which is nothing compared to the countless delays and overdrives I've gone through over the years. Does the PolyTune qualify to be a rare entry in that list of tuners? Most definitely. Its tuning accuracy, useful polyphonic mode, small footprint, and the ability to power other pedals make it one of the best pedal tuners I've ever encountered—especially at its price point. I'm a little disappointed that it can't track alternate tunings in its polyphonic mode, but its practicality and accuracy with standard tuning more than make up for that. Plus, there's a USB port at the top of the pedal to update its firmware, so hopefully we'll see this ability in the future. All in all, the PolyTune is a safe bet for anybody in the market for a fantastic tuner pedal, and even more for players who might've thought they couldn't improve on the one they already had.

Rating:

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accuracy, ease of use and a bright readout are essential.

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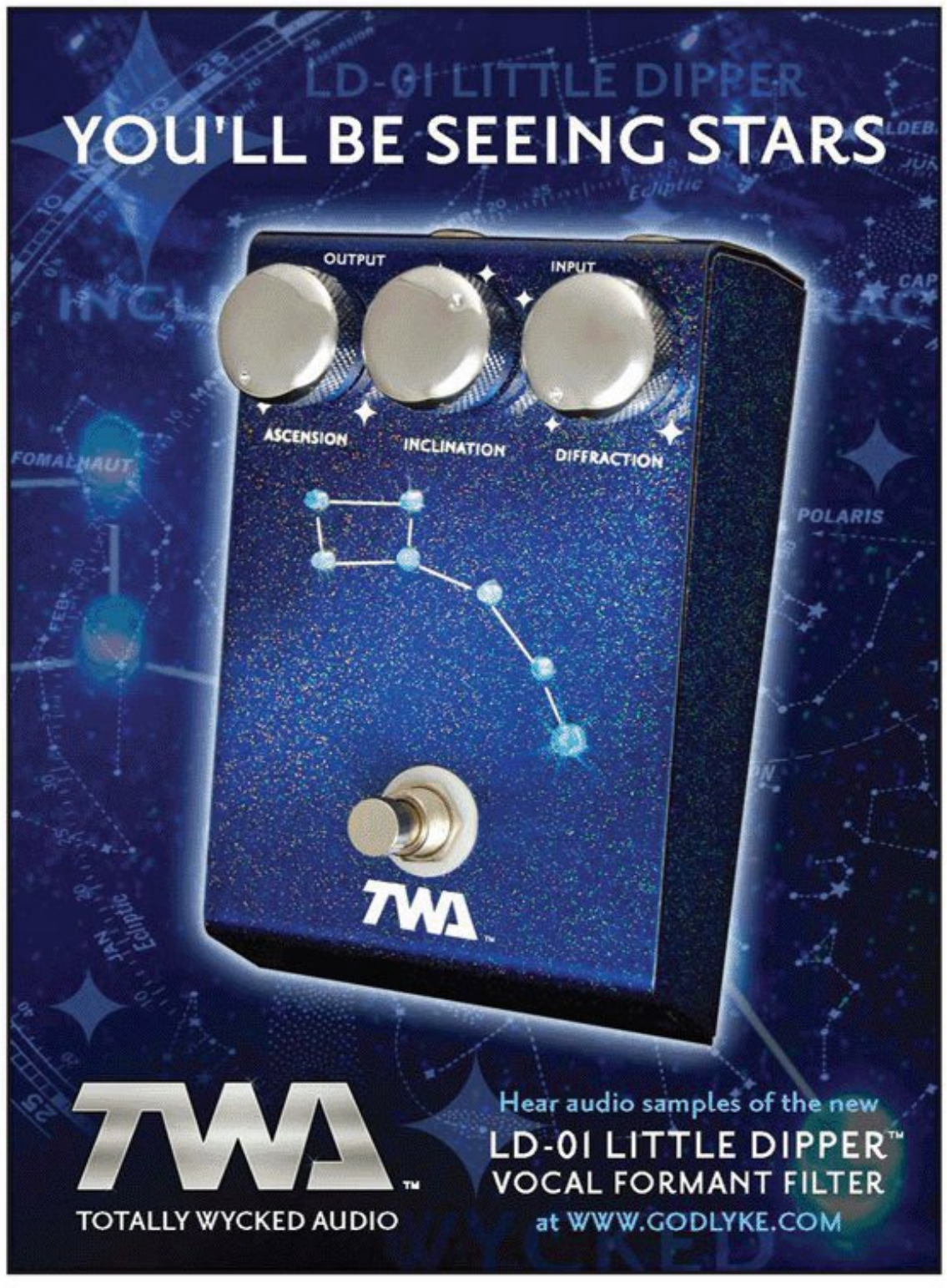

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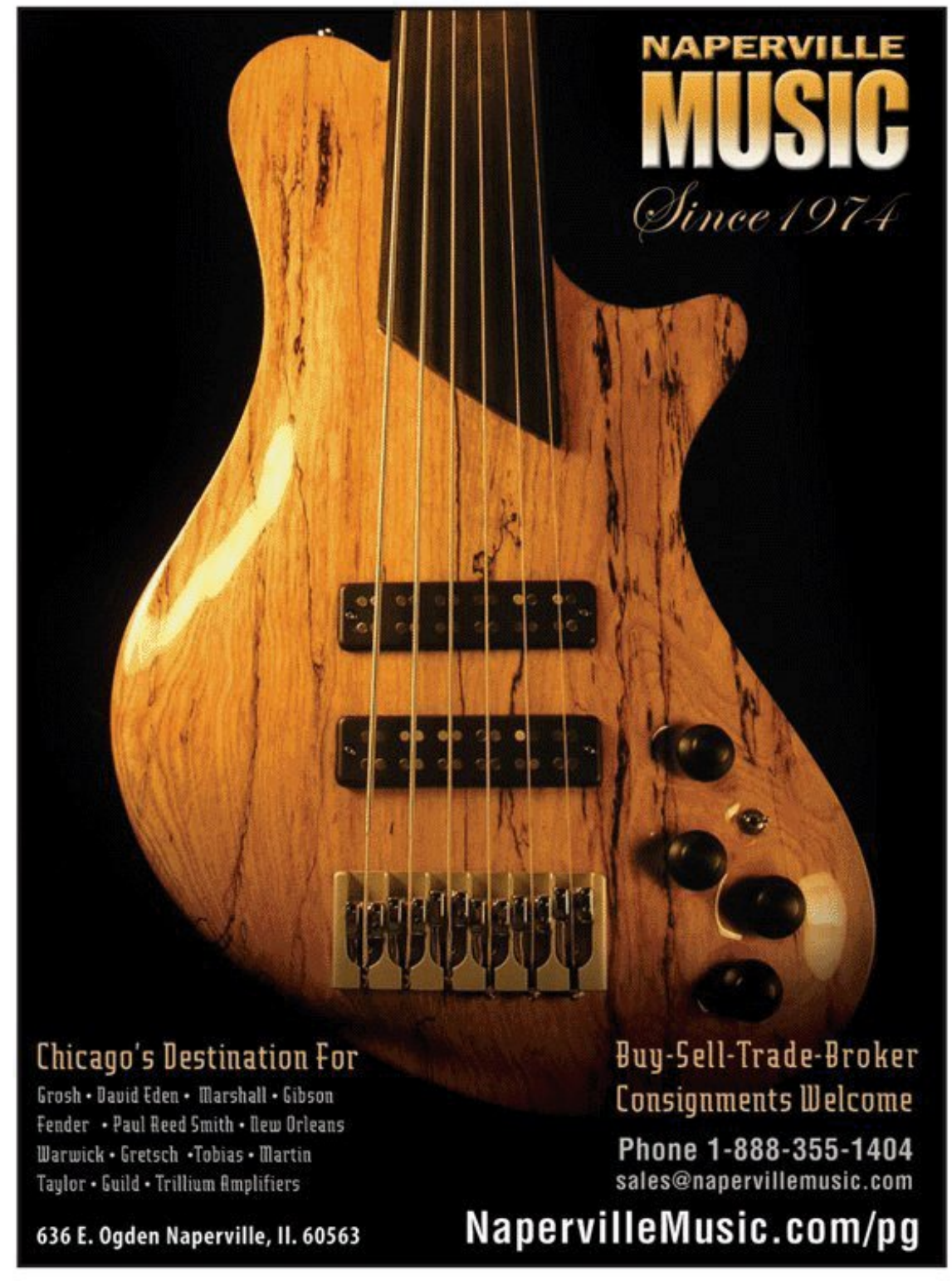

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EGNATER
Renegade

BY JORDAN WAGNER

Ever since acquiring his first guitar at 13 years old, Bruce Egnater has been obsessed with the craft. His company, Egnater Custom Amplification, has made a name for itself by providing guitarists with versatile amps complete with useful tonal options such as his Tube Mix control. The small-wattage Rebel 20 and 30 have proven to be major hits for Egnater, and the Tourmaster line has established itself as a powerful contender in the high-powered amplifier world. Not one to rest on his laurels, Egnater has released the Renegade, a 65-watt (switchable to 18) beast that aims to continue the company's practice of kicking ass and taking names.

With its vintage accoutrements of basketweave grille cloth, white piping and tan/black tolex covering, the Renegade is an intimidating looking beast. A large number of options are available to the player right on the front panel, which is sectioned off into two preamp sections—one for clean and one for dirtier tones—and one master control area. Each preamp control area features a 3-band EQ, individual Gain, Volume and Tube Mix controls, and three mini-switches to control various functions. The first of these three is a Wattage Selector, which toggles the output section between either 65 or 18 watts. Next in line are Egnater's signature "Tight and Bright" voicing switches. The first is a response switch: set for Tight, it gives the preamp a percussive attack; set for Deep, it produces a looser, spongier feel. The Bright/Normal switch gives the option of running the desired preamp in a normal mode, or a brighter mode with more harmonics in the upper register.

For those unfamiliar with Egnater's Tube Mix feature, each preamp can be set for a specific blend of 6L6 and EL34-generated frequencies. This is especially useful for those who really like the midrange grind and cut of higher-wattage British tube amps, but also really enjoy the depth and bounce provided by their American cousins. This feature is a very popular option in Egnater amps, and one of the things that really put them on the map. Finally, the master control area sports separate Reverb controls for each channel, along with Master Density and Presence, a Main overall Master and an additional footswitchable Second Master for presettable solo/volume boost. The rear panel features a standard, footswitchable effects loop, footswitch and extension cab jacks, a speaker emulated XLR line out jack, and easily accessible bias adjustments pots (with test points) for those tired of having to remove the chassis to bias power tubes. Egnater had the foresight to make these readily available for those who need them, but also understood that maladjustment of these can cause major issues. With that in mind, the pots are recessed, eliminating the possibility of accidently moving them while handling or setting up the rig.

Plugging In

For such an apparently versatile amplifier, it was appropriate to select a versatile guitar lineup to test it with. At my disposal were a 1978 Gibson Les Paul Custom, a 2008 Parker Fly Deluxe, and a 2009 Fender Road Worn Telecaster. The Renegade was coupled with a matching Egnater Tourmaster 2x12 cabinet, loaded with Egnater's custom-voiced Celestion Elite 80 speakers. The cab has a pretty cool option of its own: you can have it closed or open back, simply by removing or replacing the tightly secured centerpiece on the rear baffle (this mostly came into play testing the clean and light overdrive tones, which I'll mention shortly). With all of the EQ controls at noon and on the 65-watt setting, I plugged in the Telecaster first. This particular guitar, while it has that stinging bite a good Tele should have, doesn't seem to have an issue with raspy high end, but still I set the Bright control to Normal to see just how transparent the Renegade's channel one preamp really was. I'm very glad that I did, because the result was what I've come to expect from Egnater: a punchy, powerful clean with fantastic cut.

After playing around a little with the Tube Mix control, I found my favorite tone—the mix leaning a little more to the 6L6 side, right around the 1:30 mark. I'm a big fan of the clean tones produced by non-master volume Marshalls of yesteryear (good enough for Hendrix, good enough for me!), and that's really what I equate the common Egnater clean tone to. It's very "in your face" sounding, strong and vibrant. Even with the Bright switch set to Bright and the Tube Mix set to the maximum 6L6 setting, it still retains some of this character. It won't replace your old Fender Super Reverb, but you wouldn't want it to. It's one of my favorite cleans on the market right now, simply because it sounds so unique, and harkens back to a vintage tone that not many manufacturers are chasing after, that of a vintage Marshall clean. ▶▶▶

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EGNATER
Renegade

Oh Momma

Removing the center panel on the back of the cab only increased the tone's breadth, increasing its response and dimension as I turned the gain up a little more. Honestly, there aren't many things cooler than controlled note feedback with a clean tone, and the Parker Fly that I had plugged in at this point certainly helped with its precise vibrato system. Switching over to channel two caused the Renegade to exhibit a more aggressive character, more in the vein of an old JCM800 or modded Super Lead. What set the Renegade's tone apart from those famous amps was, ultimately, the voicing of the preamp itself. The upper midrange grind that those old British amps are known for had a unique "give," one that made them instantly recognizable to the ear. The Egnater has a more modern approach, and its voicing has more of a solid, round quality to it, with a bigger low end.

With the Les Paul, I was amazed at the Renegade's ability to stay smooth and controlled at any gain setting, especially when I was pushing it very hard in the 18-watt mode. I love the sound of low-wattage amps being pushed to the brink, and there's nothing that puts in me in a Brian May mood more than hitting one of those amps with a flurry of licks from a great neck pickup. For modern metal players, the Renegade can handle it quite nicely, especially if the music being played is on the Tool or Mastodon side of the tonal spectrum. If you're more of a fan of modern gain tones produced by American designs, the Renegade might not satisfy your craving, even at the full 6L6 setting. The voicing definitely leans more to the British side in any case, but is still capable of producing massive, pummeling gain tones with a very tight low end.

The Final Mojo

The Renegade was designed to cover a lot of ground, and it does that quite well. It still has the same tonal characteristics that you'll find in Egnater's other amplifiers, and sits on a nice middle ground feature-wise between their Rebel 30 and flagship Tourmaster amplifiers. It's being offered in a wide variety of configurations: 1x12, 2x12, or 4x10 combo, or as a head with Egnater 2x12, 4x10 or 4x12 cabinets. Guitarists looking for extreme gain tones might want to hold out for Egnater's forthcoming Armageddon amp, and the clean voicing might not be to every player's liking. Personally, I love it, and the gain tones definitely satisfy my British tone jones. Not only are there a ton of options to craft your tone, they're all useful in helping you get there. PG

Rating:

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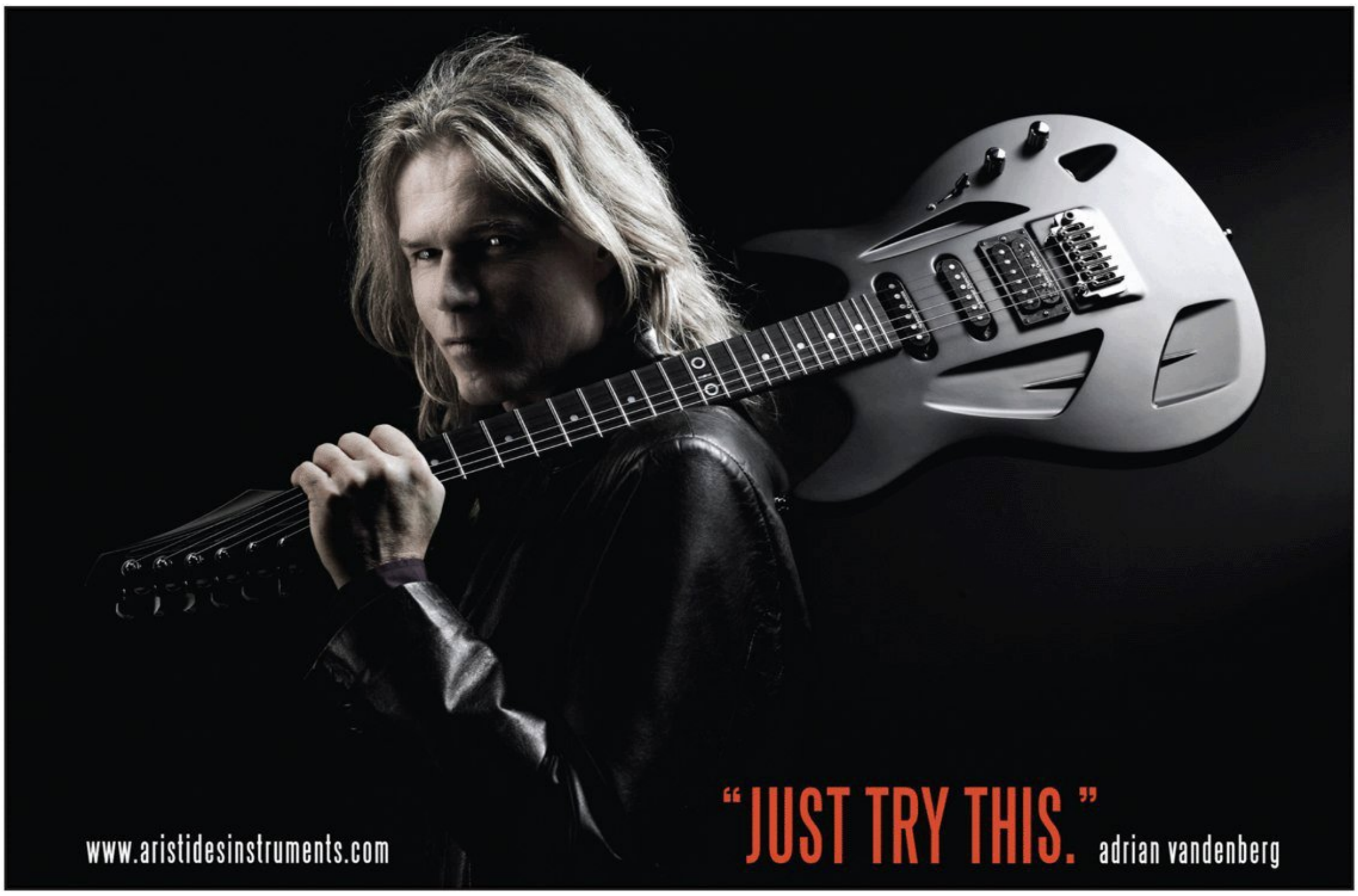

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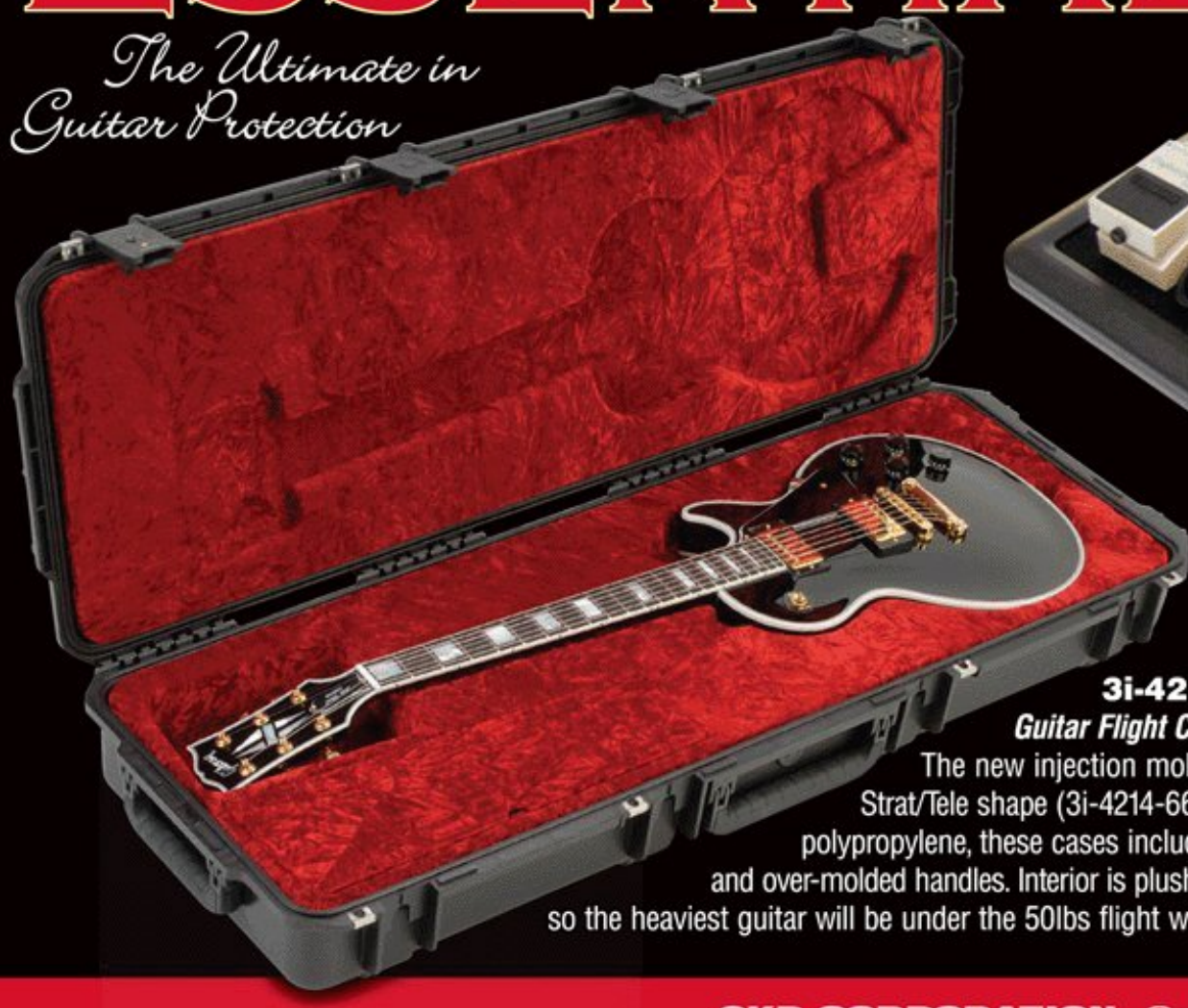

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CREATION AUDIO LABS
Holy Fire

BY STEVE OUIMETTE

Every once in a while, a product comes around that brings something different to the table. Sometimes, it's a clever variation on a common theme done in a way that seems new. At other times, it's a radical departure—something truly unique. In the case of Creation Audio Labs' Holy Fire overdrive/distortion pedal, it's a little of both.

The Look

The Holy Fire comes in a heavy, brushed stainless steel box with lettering that is punched through rather than painted or stenciled on. This lets the fire-orange light inside the pedal backlight the words, giving it an evil-meets-holy look. (CAL even cleverly arranged the Gain, Overdrive and Distortion labels to spell out "GOD" on the top of the pedal.) They've branded the pedal with "Holy" on the left and "Fire" on the right side of the stomp switch. Much like a treble cut control on an AC30, the Holy Fire features a hi-cut knob, which is signified by a "~" symbol. It does just what you'd think and backs off the highs as you turn it up. It also runs on a 48V power supply that comes with the pedal. Those 48 volts are put to great use in creating a sound unlike most gain/overdrive/distortion pedals on the market. Finally, a very cool feature of the pedal, and one I haven't seen before, is the dual-colored LED that switches from red to yellow as you go from a clean signal to wave-shaped overdrive… kinda like having a useful but vibey lava lamp built into the pedal.

The Voice of G.O.D.

I ran the Holy Fire through just about every guitar and amp I own, and it did an outstanding job with all of them. One thing that sets this pedal apart from any other gain or overdrive pedal I've used is that it always makes the sound bigger. Along with that, there was never a loss of bass response with an increase of gain, overdrive or distortion. It's a very different experience to have a pedal do this, because it doesn't really sound like a pedal at all when using just the Gain control. With a Strat and Fender Cyber-Champ, it turned a rather anemic sound into a bold, SRV-style tone that had a depth and character the amp never could have revealed on its own. I'm not sure what CAL's secret is, but the company says they use late-'50 and early-'60s analog computer technology to reshape the waveform. They say that it emulates a tube, but not in any traditional way that we're used to with pedals. Whatever it is, it's highly addictive. The way the Gain works is slightly different from a normal pedal as well: the counterclockwise position is off—as in no volume at all. This comes in handy, since you can dial in huge amounts of overdrive and distortion (more on that in a minute) and then pull back the Gain so the volume is tailored to whatever level you desire. I found this helpful in setting up a lead tone that was just slightly louder than the pedal in bypass mode but still had all the overdrive and distortion I needed.

The Overdrive and Distortion controlswork together, and you can easily use one on top of ▶▶▶

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CREATION AUDIO LABS
Holy Fire

the other. The Overdrive sound is thick without being muddy, and you can bring it up to the highest settings without adding significant noise. In fact, this pedal has got to be the quietest OD pedal I've ever heard. With my Les Paul through the Cyber-Champ set to a clean sound, I was able to get Zeppelin-style tones just by combining the right amount of Overdrive and Distortion. The only place where things got smeared was with both controls maxed out, but even that sound offered a fuzzy, stoner-rock tone that was perfect for a track I was working on. Plugging into my ENGL Ritchie Blackmore signature head allowed me to hear the Holy Fire work its magic with an already great sound. I had the amp set conservatively on the gain side to establish a solid AC/DC-style rhythm tone. With the addition of just a little extra gain (set at about 2 o'clock) the sound was huge. It's actually a bit of a spoiler to take the Holy Fire out of the chain, because everything sounds small after hearing it the other way. Bringing the Distortion control up to about 4 o'clock added an enormous amount of distortion that once again had all the body you'd ever need, with endless sustain and no added noise. Seems impossible, but there it is.

As if all of this weren't enough, I was pleasantly surprised to roll off my volume on the guitars to reveal the amp's true tone and clarity. It was as if the rolling off of the volume made the pedal disappear. Over time, I got very comfortable with leaving the pedal on all the time and working the volume knob to expose twice as much tone from the amp as I had previously achieved. The fact that the Holy Fire is so quiet made it feel out of the way until I needed it and pushed my guitar's volume past 7.

The Final Mojo

There is a world of tones tucked away inside the Holy Fire. Not only is it a clever design, it's a useful design. It offers up thick and bold gain, overdrive and distortion with the unique ability to bring the best out of your guitar and amp. Maybe it's the 48V power that gives it the type of sound I've not heard in a pedal before, or maybe it's that very different way of using analog computer technology to create the sounds. Either way, it's pure gold, and this one is staying right here with me. PG

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NIKITA Classic

BY BEN FRIEDMAN

While on the prowl at Winter NAMM, tasked by *PG* editors to follow up with some up-and-coming luthiers, I tracked down James Mellozzo, sole proprietor of Nikita Guitars, in his booth with a handful of his artistically inspired instruments. I spied a particularly interesting, dragon-themed T-style guitar to check out, but it was swiftly liberated from my eager paws by a notable artist who wanted to use it for a product demo at a neighboring amplifier booth. It was a bittersweet moment: on one hand, his incredible chops impressed me; on the other, I wouldn't see the guitar again—it made such an impression on him that he took it with him when he left the show. That experience and subsequent conversations with Mellozzo left me with the urge to review one of his handcarved instruments. I was pleased to find the Nikita Classic on my doorstep a couple weeks after the show.

When Fine Art Meets Fine Tone

Mellozzo's creative and artistically inspired approach to luthiery stems from a family lineage rooted in the arts. His medium of choice is wood: he began first as a trained master woodworker, designing and creating custom cabinets for 20 years. Then, 10 years ago, he felt a calling and began to apply his woodworking skills to guitar building. After reverse-engineering countless project guitars acquired via eBay—combined with his 30-plus years as a player—Mellozzo's self education in luthiery reached a level that led him to build his first Nikita. Since then, he's focused on building unique, signature guitars. True to his artistic roots, none are exactly replicated, making each Nikita truly one of a kind.

The Nikita Classic, with its highly figured tonewood laminates, intricate inlays and triple humbuckers, appears at first to give a nod to the creations of Alembic, Cripe and Irwin. Looking closely at the degree of craftsmanship and thoughtful design decisions that went into the guitar's construction, it's hard not to be impressed. Every design decision, executed by hand, seems to blend together, creating a balanced instrument that can stand on its own. The Classic features a body

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comprised of a laminate of mahogany, rosewood and maple that gives the guitar an attractive appearance and prominent acoustic tone. The one-piece, solid mahogany back is more than 20 years old, features a tummy cut and is finished with three coats of urethane in an opaque brown vintage tint. Atop the mahogany body sits a 1/8" rosewood slab followed by a 3/8", two-piece bookmatched figured maple top. The top is finished in a very subtle blue burst (yes, I know that sounds like an oxymoron) that starts with an aqua hue and darkens to a Caribbean blue that accentuates the beveled edge of the top—which is carved in perfect unison with the dual ebony carved pinstripes that frame the top. Overall, it's an impressive feat of craftsmanship.

Likewise, through the expert use of taping, the sides of the guitar give off the appearance of having a six-layer, wood-striped binding from the three wood types used in the laminate body. This deft execution of scraped binding also adorns the fretboard and headstock. The urethane-finished neck is also an attractive tonewood laminate, featuring five layers in total and comprised of mahogany, curly maple and wenge. The neck is topped with 22 6105-sized nickel-silver frets, and features an ample ebony fingerboard with shell dot inlays best described as "companion dots." The headstock shape approximates the body profile and features a figured maple matching headstock veneer. The hand-shaped, 12"-radius neck has the feel of a '59-style carve, but with a little more taper. It meets the body at the 15th fret. The dual-action truss rod is accessed at the headstock through a handcarved rosewood and maple cover.

The guitar is voiced with three chrome-covered Lindy Fralin Humbuckers—a 7.5K Pure PAF model in the neck, a 13.5K High Output Humbucker model in the middle and an 8.0K Pure PAF model in the bridge. This seemingly unorthodox pickup combination of vintage and high-output models is another smart design decision. To enhance playability, Mellozzo purposely lowered the hotter middle pickup to create more picking space while maintaining output balance amongst the pickups. The humbuckers are wired to a 5-way Switchcraft switch as follows: pos. 1, bridge, full humbucking, series; pos. 2, neck and middle, both pickups full humbucking, parallel; pos. 3, middle, full humbucking, series; pos. 4, neck and middle, both pickups full humbucking, parallel; and pos. 5, neck pickup, full humbucking, series. I'm a fan of unsplit humbucker combinations and was glad to see them incorporated in the Classic's design. That said, I did experience volume loss in positions 2 and 4, which according to Mellozzo has been addressed on new guitars going forward.

The guitar has some innovative design elements that are precisely executed. For example, the strings are strung through the lower end of the instrument at a 12-degree pitch to match the 12-degree pitch of the headstock. The added six inches of string length and symmetrical string pull certainly contribute to the resonance and sustain of the guitar. These sonic properties also appear to be augmented by the modified neck-through design, where the neck is set into the body up to the bridge prior to the top being installed. The handcarved rosewood and maple laminated control knobs, truss rod cover and pickup surrounds are nice design touches that are functional and add to the guitar's attractive color palette. The strings pass over a chrome Tune-o-matic bridge and a 1-11/16" black Earvana nut, and anchor into a set of locking chrome Sperzel tuners. One of my few nits with the guitar was that I noticed some glue residue around the nut, which had some sharp edges that could've been softened. The chrome strap buttons pair well with the chrome Switchcraft side-mounted input jack. The size of the neck joint, along with the location of the strap button set into it, did hamper upper fret access, but it's my understanding that Mellozzo is addressing both of these issues on future models. Lastly, the Nikita signature on the back of the neck joint is classy touch.

The high degree of craftsmanship embodied by the Classic model translates into an instrument that has exceptional natural sustain and tone. The guitar is lightweight, resonant and ▶▶▶

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NIKITA
Classic

balanced in both sitting and standing positions. Strung up with a set of Thomastik-Infeld Power Brights (.010–.050), the guitar exhibits a prominent acoustic voice with a diversified frequency response from its combination of tone woods, giving the guitar a voice as unique as its design. Notes have ample bloom with a certain degree of immediacy that is likely contributed to by the 25.5" scale in conjunction with an ebony fingerboard. The neck has a comfortable, two-degree pitch that feels quite Gibson-esque and the fretwork is well executed.

Plugged into amps from Carr, Fender and TomasZewicZ, the Classic offers up an array of usable tones that are diverse enough to handle rock, blues and jazz applications. The guitar has excellent clarity and note separation, and it sits well in the mix, particularly in the lower mids. It also has a singing quality whereby single line notes simply hang for as long as you need them—a great attribute for a blues guitar. The humbucker combinations had a great blend of fatness and quack. While not as clear as a single-coil combination, they offer up an added harmonic complexity that gave the guitar more of an acoustic quality, perfect for fingerpicking. While I am a fan of Fralin PAFs for their ability to deliver classic humbucking tones with the right amount of airiness and bite, the High Ouput model in the middle position was a personal favorite. Its position and design gave it a thick, gritty quality that had more of a fundamental emphasis than the PAFs, making it a good choice for harder, classic rock-applications.

The Final Mojo

The Classic stands out as a top-notch guitar that solidly delivers in both the tone and looks departments. At a price of just under $10,000, one would need to recognize that a substantial portion of its value is derived from the degree of time and craftsmanship embodied in this handcrafted instrument. That said, with its broad tonal offerings and meticulous craftsmanship, it is an instrument worthy of consideration amongst guitarists who can appreciate fine art and fine tone in a single offering. PG

Rating:

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XOTIC XJ-1T 4-String Bass

BY SEAN O'BRYAN SMITH

Since starting out in 1996, instrument manufacturer Xotic has earned a reputation for high quality among discerning professionals. Touring pros like Keith Horne, Ric Fierabracci, Michael Rhodes and even bassist/actor Malcolm Jamal-Warner have relied on Xotic basses to cover their gigs. In 1999, Xotic branched into the world of effects and ended up sharing the love with a number of professional guitar players like Scott Henderson and Andy Timmons. Seemingly more focused on their pedal line over the past few years due to its popularity, Xotic recently returned to the bass world with a bang when they offered their XJ-1T 5-string bass. Reacting to the massive response that model recieved, Xotic released its cousin, the XJ-1T 4-string, at the 2010 NAMM show. The XJ-1T embodies what Xotic refers to as an "uncompromising harmony of tradition and advancement," and the new 4-string demonstrates their commitment with conviction.

Flair for the Xotic

The XJ-1T is more than just a classic Jazz-style bass. Even though the body is inspired by a timeless classic, the bass is pure Xotic. There are some traditional features that players would expect, like a bolt-on 22-fret neck, offset body and all the appearance of a high-end J-bass clone. Features that distinguish the XJ-1T from other offerings on the market are the eye-catching Lindy Fralin pickups, Hipshot UltraLight tuners and bridge, a custom-shaped pickguard and the secret weapon of any Xotic: the electronics. Xotic has always been known for their pedals and preamps, and bassists can revel in the fact that their popular 3-band preamp is onboard the XJ-1T. The system runs at 18 volts for extended headroom and is a tone tweaker's delight. The chrome knobs are the same as a traditional J-bass: an individual volume control for each pickup and a master tone. The mini-knobs are for the active preamp and control bass, mid and treble.

This is not all that dwells deep within the XJ-1T. Both of the volume knobs on the bass are push/pull. The first allows the bass to go into passive mode for going completely classic J sonically. The second is a unique humbucking mode that combines both pickups

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as one big pickup. In this mode, your front volume control now becomes a master volume for some serious thunder. For the tweaking obsessed, we're still not over with the Xotic. Accessible through the back panel are additional mid-frequency switches and even an output gain control. You can literally spend hours dialing in the bass to whatever you fancy. Granted, the stock settings are top notch, but this is a super-cool option nonetheless.

Feature-wise, the bass is very similar to the 2009 Xotic XJ-1T 5-String—the most obvious difference being the fact that it's got one less string. But due to its wood combination, the XJ-1T 4-String has the heart of a '70s J-bass. It sports an oil-finished maple neck with a maple fretboard, unlike its 5-string cousin. Both basses do use 6150 Jescar nickel-silver frets. The other difference is the ash body on the XJ-1T. The instrument just has the feel of a '70s gem… without the disco music and large collars.

Just taking it out of the case, I was seriously impressed with the overall craftsmanship, and after hours of inspection I was honestly quite surprised not to find any real flaws. The stock setup was nice and even, but due to my lighter playing style, I dropped the action. Luckily, the bass didn't need any other tweaks and it was set up like an absolute dream. The oil-finished neck has a wonderful worn-in feel. Most surprising was how resonant the bass was even unplugged. Sustain and articulation was off the charts, and there was just the right amount of midrange bark, which was surprising since maple and ash combinations have the potential to be overly bright sounding. To test the bass, I used it on a number of live dates as well as master and demo sessions. In every aspect the bass delivered completely. You can really tell that Xotic has done some serious homework on this bass, and I'd venture to guess they've been asking players for their needs as well. Every tone setting proved to be useful for a number of needs. Slap players can get a very Marcus Miller-like tone from the active electronics, and the Fralins are seriously clean and easy to record. What I particularly dug was the fact that I could also dial in a good Jaco-esque tone out of the soloed bridge pickup. J-basses can usually cover one or the other well, but not both.

The Final Mojo

Is it worth the funds for this bass in comparison to other, US-built J clones? Absolutely. It sounds as good, if not better than, any other contender out there. Even more important is that it's more flexible than most. This bass is a Swiss Army knife and could be considered a main axe regardless of what genre you're in. I myself am already enjoying being able to leave a number of other basses in my studio and just taking the XJ-1T to sessions. If you're a lover of high-end J-basses, this may very well be your axe. PG

Rating:

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PG NEW PRODUCTS

We're constantly hearing about manufacturers' latest gear unveilings—stuff that's so new we haven't personally laid eyes or hands on it yet. We're as excited as you when manufacturers tell us about new toys coming down the pike (hello—we're *Premier Guitar*, after all!), so we figure the least we can do is pass the news along. Check back every month to get the scoop, and who knows—maybe we'll end up reviewing the stuff you're stoked about when it's available.

Stets Metal Arts Stetsbar Pro II for Stratocasters
Designed for Strat trem cavities, the Stetsbar Pro II retains the company's no-modifications-required ethic so you can keep your guitar in stock condition. The Stetsbar Pro II's bridge, saddle, and string anchors all glide on roller bearings that reportedly eliminate string drag and improve stability. Further, its "floating lock" not only prevents detuning if a string breaks, but also allows drop tuning on the fly.
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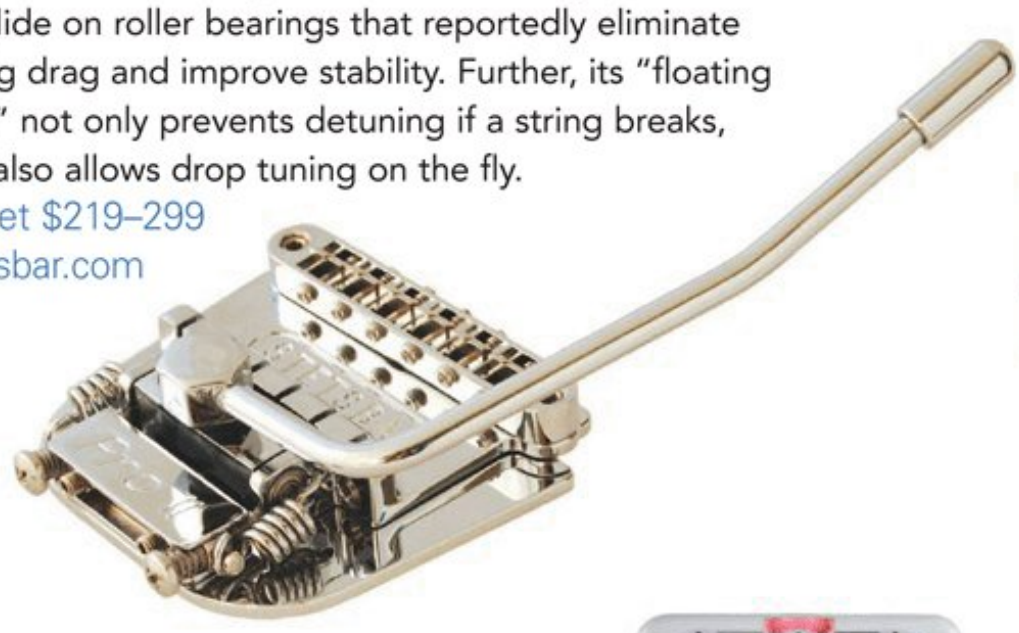

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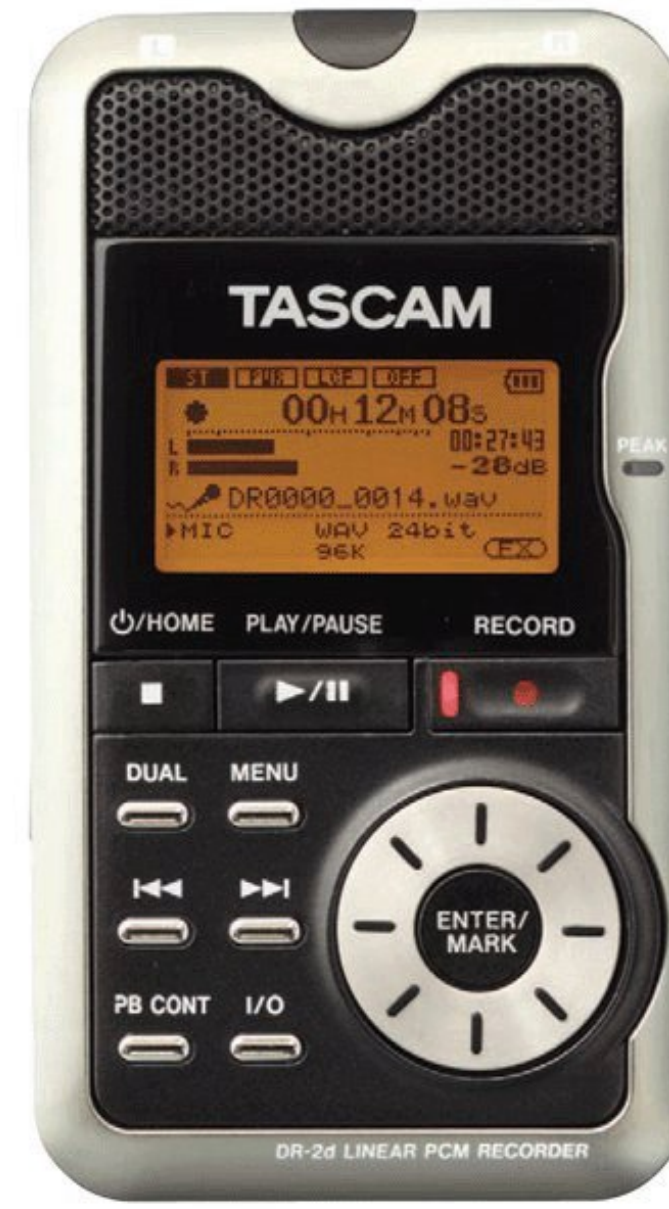

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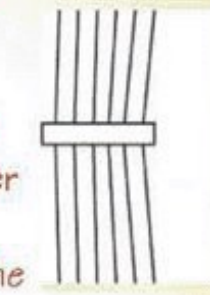
Most capos cause tuning problems by the way they engage the neck.

They pull the strings to one side; some get stretched more than others. The strings' tension is trying to pull them back into line under the capo, and any retuned strings will be worse when the capo is removed.



The Shubb Capo closes onto the neck just like your hand — not like a clothespin, or a belt, or a vise, or a pair of scissors or pliers — there is no sideways pull on the strings.

Result: the strings are
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1963 GIBSON FIREBIRD

The Gibson Firebird may not be as well known as its cousins the Les Paul and SG, but it does have a cult following of its own. Modeled after the then, futuristic-looking Explorer, the Firebird has a more subtle appearance. Ray Dietrich, best known for his work on a different type of classic—the automobile—was hired by Gibson president Ted McCarty to create a new guitar. Faced with this challenge, Dietrich went against the grain by making the lower bout more prominent than the upper. The guitar was also the first Gibson to have a neck-through construction, as earlier models had been set-neck designs.

Due to the nature of the design, all early Firebirds are considered "reverse," both in the prominence of the bouts and the headstock. Later models, with the tuners on the bass side and a larger upper bout, are "non-reverse." The Firebird seen here, however, is a rare gem featuring a transition headstock (with the tuners on the bass side), a reverse body and a gorgeous sunburst finish.

Thanks to Andy Gerber, Daniel Demchuk and Scott Silver of Chicago Music Exchange for listing this guitar on Gear Search. Be sure to visit their site to see their commercials! Whether you're looking for a vintage piece or a modern take on a classic, chances are it's on Gear Search. There are more than 47,000 pieces of gear listed, including some of the hardest-to-get gear in the world. Head to premierguitar.com/gear to find your dream instrument! PG

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1953 Epiphone Century

Epiphone was founded in 1873 by Anastasios Stathopoulos, who initially built only fiddles and lutes in the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey). In the early 20th century, Stathopoulos and Epiphone made the move to Queens, New York, and expanded into building mandolins and banjos. Finally, in 1928 Epiphone built its first line of guitars, the Recording series. And in 1935, the company branched into the electrified world with the Electar Series (originally the Electraphone).

The Century model was introduced in 1939, and the 1953 model pictured here features a maple body with a sunburst finish, a rosewood fretboard and headstock, a New York neck pickup without adjustable poles, a Bakelite pickguard, a trapeze tailpiece and octagonal volume and tone controls with peaked facets.

It was rumored that the Century was used by Django Reinhardt during his only US tour in 1946 with Duke Ellington, but he actually used the bigger Epiphone Zephyr (also introduced in 1939) while in the States.

A special thanks to PG contributor Jeffrey O'Connor for this exquisite photograph. PG

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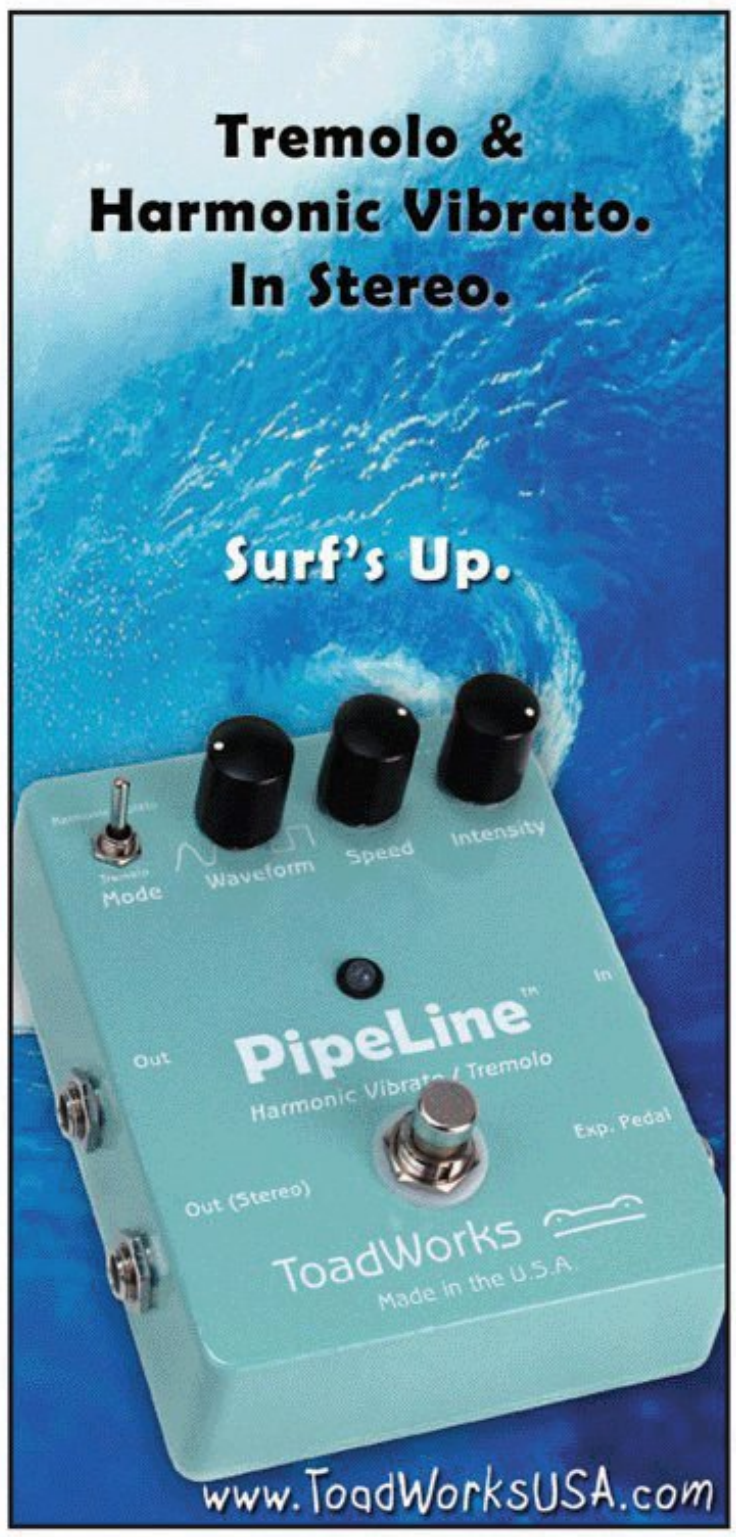

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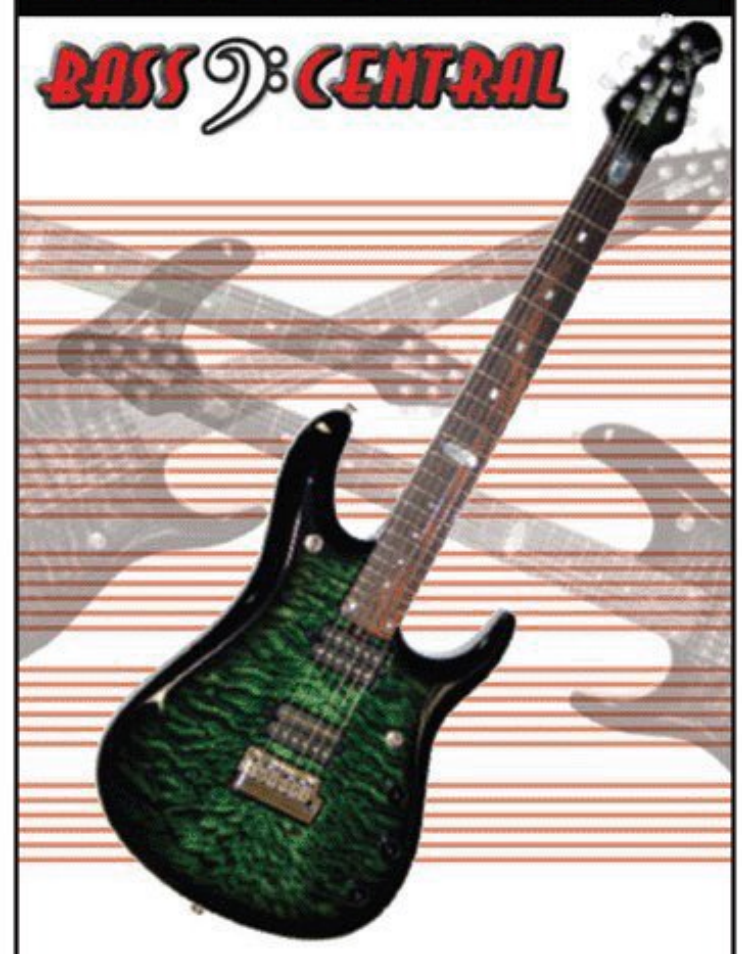

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WILLIAM JEFFREY JONES GUITARS

William Jeffrey Jones Guitars is a one-man shop in southern Missouri where Jeffrey Jones pours his decades of commercial carving and sculpting experience into a line of handbuilt custom guitars. Jones has been running a table saw since he was a kid, thanks to the tutelage of his woodworking father, Willy. His artistic skills led him to a career sculpting toy prototypes for companies like McFarlane and NECA. He has played guitar for 35 years, and his desire for creative freedom eventually brought him back to the guitar.

Jones has been building guitars full-time for a year and a half, and in that time he has built a gorgeous collection of instruments. His models range from intricately carved affairs like the Dragonwing to smoothly contoured models like the Kronos and simpler instruments like the Arcadia double-cutaway.

Jones uses local woods almost exclusively, ranging from exquisitely figured walnut to sassafras. He favors chambered and semi-hollow guitars—he loves the response—and most of his instruments weigh less than seven pounds. Jones uses Tru-Oil finish on nearly all of his guitars because the thin film "lets the wood sound like wood." Jones also enjoys building fretless guitars because he says they're so fun to play.

Dragonwing
The Dragonwing solidbody is carved from a single piece of walnut and has a rosewood neck, ebony fretboard and a sculpted-ebony floating bridge. It features a P-90 single-coil custom made by Clint Searcy of Searcy String Works—Jones' main pickup supplier—in Nashville. Carved instruments are a small portion of what he builds, but Jones is constantly sketching ideas. His mermaid and Victorian scroll carved instruments can be seen on his website.

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Argos
The Argos semi-hollowbody features a walnut back and a one-piece walnut top, with a black-dyed maple veneer in the middle. The set neck is also of walnut, and it features carbon-fiber reinforcement, a dual-action truss rod and an ebony fretboard with a C profile. Controls include a three-way pickup-selector, a volume and a push-pull tone knob for tapping the Searcy String Works P-90s. The guitar also features a Tune-o-matic bridge and Gotoh tuners.

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PG APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

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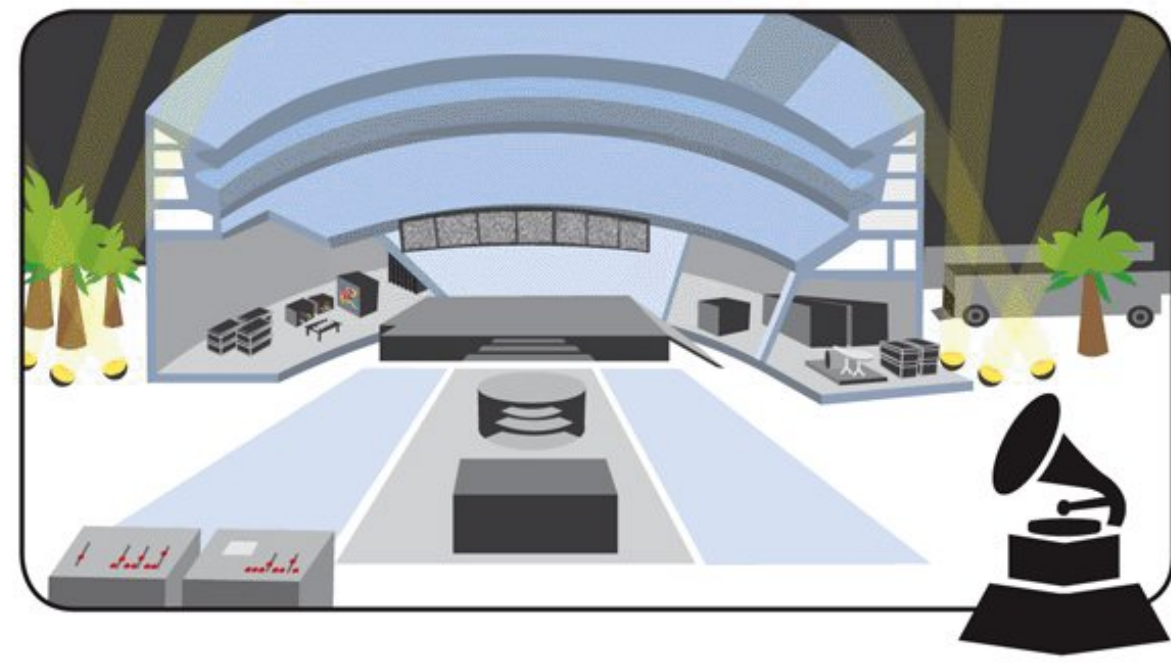
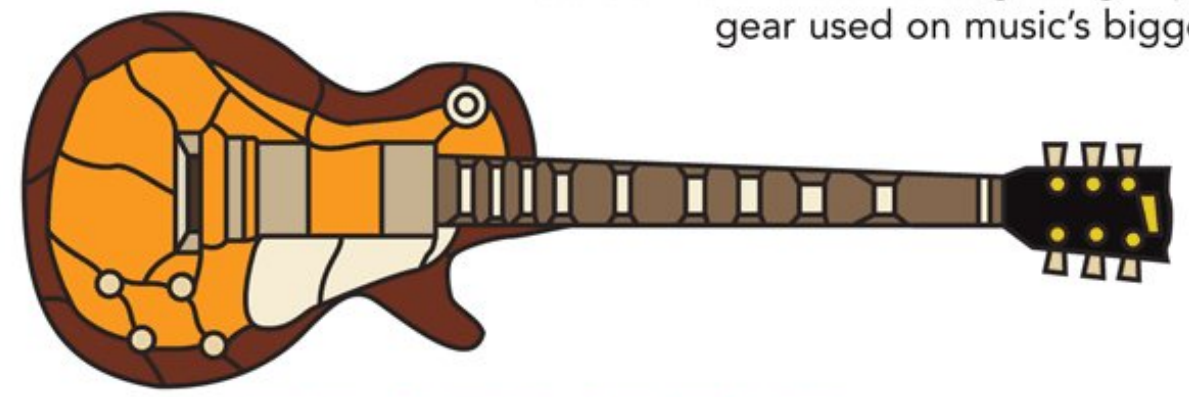
ACE FREHLEY

We sit down with the Spaceman to talk about the gear and the sessions for his new solo album, *Anomaly*.



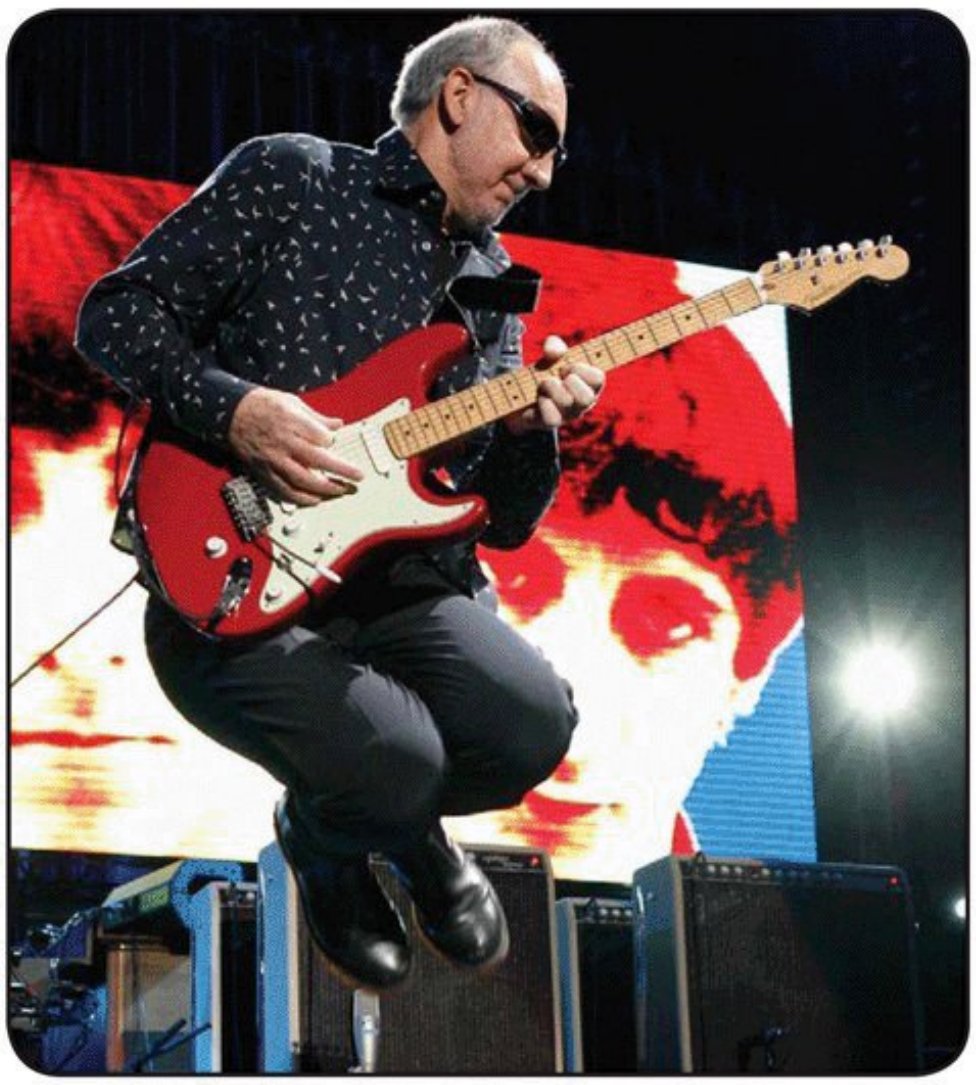
GEAR OF THE GRAMMYS

Go behind the scenes to get a glimpse of the gear used on music's biggest night.



THE CULT OF TONE

Do some soul searching to see if you're a zealot or a heretic—and whether that's a good or a bad thing.



PETE TOWNSHEND

Premier Guitar lands a killer post-Super Bowl interview that's likely the Who guitarist's most forthcoming and gear-centric ever.

STUDIO PREPARATION

Premier Guitar talks with heavy-hitting recording artists and producers to get tips on maximizing studio productivity—and creativity.

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